



Cornell University Library

BOUGHT WITH THE INCOME
FROM THE
SAGE ENDOWMENT FUND
THE GIFT OF

Henry W. Sage

1891

A.2,0662 20/2/1907

[illegible]

Cornell University Library
QH 104.5.N5F57

1. The first step in the process is to identify the problem or issue that needs to be addressed. This involves gathering information and understanding the context of the problem.

map



Cornell University
Library

The original of this book is in
the Cornell University Library.

There are no known copyright restrictions in
the United States on the use of the text.

<http://www.archive.org/details/cu31924003686361>

S T U D I E S

IN

THE FIELD AND FOREST.

BY

WILSON FLAGG.
=

"All that the genial ray of morning gilds,
And all that echoes to the song of even." — BEATTIE.

BOSTON:
LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY.
1857.

QH
104
.5
N5
F57

Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1856, by
LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY,
In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the District of Massachusetts.

C A M B R I D G E :
ALLEN AND FARNHAM, PRINTERS.

P R E F A C E .

THE descriptions of the phases of the year, included in this volume, were first printed in the years 1839 and 1840, in the "Boston Weekly Magazine," published by D. H. Ela and John B. Hall. The author afterwards, for several years, devoted himself entirely to the political press. Finding at last, that to keep along with his party, he must be prepared, on the arrival of every new era, to repudiate, if not to execrate the opinions and measures which he had formerly defended, he renounced all connection with politics, and in 1853, resumed his occupation in that department of literature which he had so long neglected. The pieces now presented to the public are a selection from the contributions of the author to the periodical press, with the addition of several new ones. A large portion of these appeared originally in Charles M. Hovey's "Magazine of Horticulture," and a few others in the "Salem Gazette," in which the descriptions of the months were likewise reprinted. As these essays were written at

different times, and published in different journals, without any original intention of making a book of them, the reader will be able to account for occasional repetitions, and for the want of those easy transitions from one chapter to another, which would have rendered the volume more unique.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. JANUARY	8
III. A COLD DAY	17
IV. SOUNDS FROM INANIMATE NATURE	21
V. FEBRUARY	30
VI. RUINS	38
VII. ROCKS	45
VIII. OLD ROADS	52
IX. MARCH	57
X. WEATHER SIGNS	65
XI. COLORS AND FRAGRANCE OF FLOWERS	75
XII. APRIL	87
XIII. THE VERNAL FLOWERS	96
XIV. PLEA FOR THE BIRDS	106
XV. THE SINGING BIRDS AND THEIR SONGS	113
XVI. MAY	123
XVII. WOOD SCENERY IN MAY	130
XVIII. ON MULTIPLYING THE BIRDS AROUND OUR Dwellings	138

XIX.	JUNE	148
XX	A SUMMER NIGHT IN THE WOODS	159
XXI.	MORNING IN SUMMER	167
XXII.	JULY	174
XXIII.	THE SEA-SHORE	183
XXIV.	AUGUST	190
XXV.	THE THREE DEITIES	200
XXVI.	ANGLING	203
XXVII.	THE FLOWERLESS PLANTS	210
XXVIII.	SEPTEMBER	221
XXIX.	MUSIC OF INSECTS	228
XXX.	THE FLOWERS OF AUTUMN	236
XXXI.	OCTOBER	241
XXXII.	CLOUDS	249
XXXIII.	WATER SCENERY	260
XXXIV.	NOVEMBER	267
XXXV.	THE FALL OF THE LEAF	276
XXXVI.	THE INDIAN SUMMER	288
XXXVII.	PICTURESQUE ANIMALS	292
XXXVIII.	DECEMBER	302
XXXIX.	OLD HOUSES AND THEIR INCLOSURES	310
XL.	FLIGHT OF THE WOOD-NYMPHS	320

STUDIES IN THE FIELD AND FOREST.

I.

INTRODUCTION.

THE object of this work is to foster in the public mind a taste for the observation of natural objects and to cultivate that sentiment which is usually designated as the love of nature. Whatever may be our situation in life, this habit of the mind will contribute to our happiness, in proportion as it predominates over our taste for other pleasures, without interfering with our necessary avocations. No man, like the brute, can be happy from the mere gratification of his animal wants. All our pleasures, including those derived from the survey of nature, must be exalted by some poetic sentiment, or they will soon become tiresome and insipid. The ox that grazes in the pasture undoubtedly receives gratification from the sight of green fields and the smell of fresh meadows: but he has no *ideality*. He weaves no pleasant images of fancy with the scenes he loves to frequent; his mind is singularly practical, and his taste is entirely unconnected with any mental emotions. He cherishes no illusions save those which may be suggested by his fears. A man of low intellect may behold with rapture a garden abounding in ripe and delicious fruits; but for him the garden has no illusive

charms, nor will his dull imagination lead him to admire a single object that is without self-evident utility.

There are many persons who live a long life in the country, without acquiring this imaginative habit of the mind. They can enjoy the sight of any thing that contributes to their comfort, or to the gratification of their wants and appetites, and of that sort of beauty which is glaring like a modern parterre; but they are still unimbued with the love of nature. This is the gift of those who have passed beyond the ordinary plodding stage of mental culture, and who have learned to associate with almost every object in nature some image derived from the imagination. I believe that all civilized people are more or less affected by it; but with many it is a circumstance from which they derive a great proportion of the happiness they find in this life. It is this sentiment more than any other that enables one to be happy in retirement. He who, when released from the cares of his usual occupations, can find pleasure in a walk in the fields, has a fund of enjoyment, at almost all times and seasons, outside of his own doors. To persons of this character nature always furnishes exercise both for the reason and the imagination. Hence there are two classes of persons that derive pleasure from rural studies and pursuits,—those who study natural history as a science, and those who survey the landscape, and its various objects, with a mind stored with poetic imagery, of which, in one form or another, almost every object is suggestive. These suggestions may arise from images derived from our reading or from our experience; but no man was ever an enthusiastic lover of nature, without a proportional share of poetic sensibility.

A child is pleased with a flower, because it affects the

sight with an agreeable sensation. Later in life, flowers would fail to yield us any pleasure, did we not associate them with certain agreeable fancies; with the remembrance perhaps of the pleasures they afforded us in childhood, and of their connection with many simple and interesting adventures; with the offices of friendship and love, and their association with numerous poetic and romantic images. But in some minds flowers become so intimately allied with those interesting sentiments, that they are beheld with still more delight than they afforded in childhood. It is for this reason that if one spent his early years in the country, the wild flowers are so much more pleasing, to a cultivated and poetic mind, than the fairest exotics, with the exception of those which have always been naturalized in our gardens.

He who lays out a garden with a gorgeous profusion of flowers, so disposed as to make a dazzling kaleidoscopic picture, and causing the grounds to resemble a brilliant Turkey carpet, forgets that by this arrangement he destroys all their power to contribute to the pleasures of sentiment. The flowers are then degraded to act the part of the mere threads which are used to form the beautiful designs in tapestry. They lose thereby all their individuality and all their poetry. They are rendered by their assemblage, productive only of an agreeable physical sensation: for this reason, minds of an inferior order derive the most pleasure from these inane exhibitions. Those gardens in which the flowers are few and not artificially arranged, are the most pleasing to a man of rational sensibility. As soon as they begin to dazzle the eyes, they cease to interest the mind or to affect the imagination.

Man may derive the same pleasure from a garden

as from the wilds, if he attempts only to gratify his love of nature, instead of his vanity or ambition. I believe the most happiness is found in those little flower-gardens, which are cultivated by humble people in the country, and contain a scanty variety, hardly exceeding that of the next wild wood or pasture. In a garden plat laid out in the most simple manner, a few ordinary flowers which are as familiar to us as the dandelion and the buttercup, often form a border around the square beds that are devoted to culinary vegetables. Among these a few daffodils greet the inmates of the house, in early spring, with a swarm of pleasing memories, and infuse into their souls the glow of happier days and years. Occasional clusters of tulips come up in this border so modestly, as hardly to remind one that they are emblematical of display. Here the lily is truly the symbol of meekness; and the roses, that are scattered sparingly among other plants, are sure to awaken that delightful sentiment which is always associated with this flower, in the rude pasture or in a humble garden.

The only approach to what may be called an imitation of nature, in a garden, is the avoidance of profusion; for Nature does not plant her flowers in clumps, and seldom makes any single species grow together exclusively or in great abundance. The very scarcity of certain species constitutes a part of their charm; and half the cause of our preference of wild flowers to those of the garden, is the habit of finding them half concealed in some little dingle, or under the protection of a loftier plant, where they serve to emblem some interesting moral trait or affection. How soon would the field, the wild wood, and the pasture lose all their attractions, if they were crowded with flowers as some vain people crowd their gardens. All the poetry of

nature would vanish with this profusion, and half the pleasure we derive from the survey of her works, would be destroyed.

The love of nature is an humble affection of the mind that may render every man happy. It has no connection with vanity, and finds more pleasure in contemplating a simple and modest flower-garden, reared by some pious votary of nature, than the most gorgeous parterre. It is a false notion, that without wealth one has no means of enjoying the pleasures of a garden; or that one must live in a showy house to give evidence of taste. The "love of the beautiful" has lately become a subject of the merest cant; for a love of the beautiful, except as it is connected with sentiment, is no better than the taste of the savage who daubs himself with paint, or of the dandy who covers himself with jewelry. The most uncultivated and prosaic of mankind have that love of the beautiful which indulges itself in gorgeous tapestry, dazzling embellishments, highly ornamented houses, and fashionable finery. Such are the men who see no charms in nature, unless she be dressed like the estate of a nobleman. No people can be rendered more happy by the cultivation of this love of mere agreeable sensations. I would encourage frugality in the decoration of nature, as well as in the decoration of the person; and I would plant flowers, not as mere beautiful objects, but as emblems of some pleasing traits of character, and material forms that serve to awaken in the mind some poetic image, that shall nurture and delight the soul.

The love of nature is planted more or less in every human breast, though in many it is not sufficient to repress the more energetic love of finery and display. But the eagerness with which all persons, when em-

ployed in decorating a hall for a festive occasion, seize an opportunity to go into the woods, shows an innate love of nature still glowing warmly in their hearts. Upon arriving there and commencing their rustic work of plunder, beneath the odorous pines or among the trailing evergreens, they are struck with surprise at the sudden buoyancy that animates their spirits. There are but few who have yet learned how nature is ever ready to contribute to the enjoyments of those, who, with humble mind are ready to receive her gifts, where only they can be fully enjoyed, under the threshold of her own temples in the fields and woods. It is then, while looking with delight upon the husbandman engaged in his rustic toils, we feel a painful regret that we ourselves cannot return to those occupations, which are, after all, the truest sources of happiness.

Nature, by having endowed mankind with this innate love of rural pursuits, proves her design that our happiness should depend on her own munificence; and on the love with which her scenes inspire us, depends our capacity to preserve our minds from sadness, and to turn the good things of earth into fountains of joy. She has disclosed to the eyes of the worldly man, only the mere surface of beauty: but for him who yields himself to her guidance, there is an inner light provided that opens to him an infinite world of wonders and stores of happiness. The green plain and the blue vault of heaven do not escape the notice of the most uncultivated boor; but to the man of feeling alone do they convey an idea of the immensity of the one, and the infinite beauty of the other.

Man can make himself happy only by confining his ambition to the simple attainment of the approbation of virtuous men, and by restraining his desires within

the bounds of a few acres, cultivated by his own hand. Then will he find his pleasures expanding with the simplicity of his wants; and while the lovers of forbidden things are loathing life amid a surfeit of luxuries, he discovers with the light of every new morning, some fresh fountain of happiness at the inner shrine of nature.

II.

JANUARY.



POETS in all ages have sung of the delights of seed-time and harvest, and of the voluptuous pleasures of summer; but when treating of winter, they have confined their descriptions to the sports of the season, rather than to the beauties of nature. Winter is supposed to furnish but few enjoyments to be compared with those of summer; because the majority of men, being oppressed by too many burdens, naturally yearn for a life of indolence. I will not deny that the pleasures derived from the direct influence of nature are greatly diminished in cold weather; there are not so many interesting objects to amuse the mind, as in the season when all animated things are awake, and the earth is covered with vegetation; but there are many pleasant rural excursions and invigorating exercises, which can be enjoyed only in the winter season, and for which thousands of our undegenerate yeomanry would welcome its annual visit.

It is only on occasional days of tempest or extreme cold, which form but a small portion of the whole season, that one, who has a moderate share of health and vigor, is necessarily confined within doors. The pleas-

ures of a winter's walk are chiefly such as are derived from prospect. A landscape painter could be but partially acquainted with the sublimity of terrestrial scenery, if he had never looked upon the earth when it was covered with snow. In summer the prospect unfolds such an infinite array of beautiful things to our sight, that the sublimity of the scene is hidden beneath a spectacle of dazzling and gorgeous splendor. We are then more powerfully attracted by objects of beauty that charm the senses, than by those grander aspects of nature that awaken the emotion of sublimity. In winter, nature is divested of all those accompaniments of her scenery which are not in unison with grandeur. At this period, therefore, the mind is affected with nobler thoughts; it is less bewildered by a multitude of fascinating objects, and is more free to indulge itself in a train of profound meditations. In summer the lover of nature is intoxicated with beauty; in winter he feels a freedom of thought and an exhilaration of soul, which can be fully enjoyed only when contemplating the grandeur and serenity of the elements in their repose.

The exhilaration of mind attending a winter walk in the fields and woods, when the earth is covered with snow, surpasses any emotion of the kind which is produced by the appearance of nature at any other season. We often hear in conversation of the invigorating effects of cold weather; yet those few only who are engaged in rural occupations, and who spend the greater part of the day in the open air, can fully realize the amount of physical enjoyment that springs from it. I can appreciate the languid recreations of a warm summer's day. When one is at leisure in the country he cannot fail to enjoy it, if he can take shelter under

the canopy of trees, or in the deeper shade of the forest. But these languid enjoyments would soon become oppressive and monotonous; and the constant participation of them must cause one gradually to degenerate into a mere animal. The human mind is constituted to feel positive pleasure only in action. Sleep and rest are mere negative conditions, to which we submit with a grateful sense of their power to fit us for the renewed exercise of the mind and the body. The pleasures of the inhabitant of southern climes compared with those of the northern man, differ as the pleasures of repose differ from those of action; and although almost every man feels a sense of regret, when he perceives the approach of winter, I believe, that to the healthy and the hardy, this season is nearly as welcome as summer.

One of the noted peculiarities of this month when our fathers were living, was the great thaw. In ancient days, when the winter regularly commenced with December and ended with February, this annual thaw seldom failed to visit our climate in the month of January. Since the clearing of the forests, the character of the seasons is greatly altered. The mean annual temperature remains the same; but winter has encroached upon the green boundaries of spring, and often ventures to sprinkle his frosts upon the flowery landscape of June. He has usurped dominion over about five months of the year, during which the cold, lasting but a few days at a time, is constantly alternating with longer spells of mild and thawing weather. Hence there is no month of winter when we may not be visited by a thaw; and the ices of December may be broken up at Christmas, not to be renewed until March.

In our latitude at the present time, January is usually

the month of the greatest cold; and in severe weather there is a general stillness that is favorable to musing. The little streamlets are frozen and silent, and there is hardly any motion except of the winds, and of the trees that bend to their force. But the works of nature are still carried on beneath the frost and snow. Though the flowers are buried in their hyemal sleep, thousands of unseen elements are present, all waiting to prepare their hues and fragrance, when the spring returns and wakes the flowers, and calls the bees out from their hives. Nature is always active in her operations; and during winter are the embryos nursed of myriad hosts, that will soon spread beauty over the plains, and give animation to the field and forest.

Since the beauties of summer and autumn have faded, nature has bestowed on earth and man a lovely recompense, and spread the prospect with new scenes of beauty and sublimity. The frozen branches of the trees are clattering in the wind, and the reed stands nodding above the ice and shivers in the rustling breeze. But while these things remind us of the chills of winter, the universal prospect of snow sends into the soul the light of its own perfect purity and splendor, and makes the landscape still beautiful in its desolation. Though we look in vain for a green herb, save where the ferns and mosses conceal themselves in little dingles among the rocks, yet the general face of the earth is unsurpassed in brilliancy. Morning, noon, and night exhibit glories unknown to any other season; and the moon is more lovely when she looks down from her starry throne, and over field, lake, mountain, and valley, emblems the tranquillity of heaven.

It is pleasing to watch the progress and movements of a snow-storm, while the flakes are thickly falling

from the skies, and the drifts are rapidly accumulating along the sides of the fences, and in the lanes and hollows. The peculiar motion of the winds, while eddying and whirling over the varied surface of the ground, is rendered more apparent than by any other phenomenon. Every curve and every irregular twisting of the wind is made palpable, to a degree that is never witnessed in the whirling leaves of autumn, in the sand of the desert, or in the dashing spray of the ocean. The appearance is less exciting, when the snow descends through a perfectly still atmosphere; but after its cessation, we may witness a spectacle of singular beauty. There has been no wind to disturb the snow-flakes as they were deposited on the branches of the trees, to which they adhere, and hang from them like a drapery of muslin. Then do we see throughout the woods the mimic splendor of June; and the plumage of snow that hangs from the branches, revives in fancy's eye the white clustering blossoms of the orchards in early summer.

Sometimes when the woods are fully wreathed in snow-flakes, and the earth is clothed in an interminable robe of ermine, the full moon rises upon the landscape, and illumines the whole scene with a kind of unearthly splendor. If we wake out of sleep into a sudden view of this enchanted scene, though the mind be depressed with sorrow, it is impossible, without rapture, to contemplate the glorious prospect. The unblemished purity of the snow picture, before the senses are awakened to a full and realizing consciousness of our situation, glows upon the vision, like a scene from that fairy world which has often gleamed upon the soul during its youthful season of romance and poetry. And when the early rays of morning penetrate these

feathery branches; and spread over the white and spotless hills of snow a rosy tinge, like the hues that burnish the clouds at sunset, and kindle amid the glittering fleece, that is wreathed around the branches, all the changeable colors of the rainbow; we are compelled to exclaim that the summer landscape with all its verdure and flowery magnificence, was never more lovely than this transitory scene of beauty. Yet the brilliancy of this spectacle, like the rainbow in heaven, passes away almost while we are gazing on its fantastic splendor. A brisk current of wind scatters from the branches, like the fading leaves of autumn, all the false honors that have garlanded the forests, and in an hour they have disappeared for ever.

Though we are apt to look upon snow as the mere rude and dreary accompaniment of winter, it not only constitutes one of the principal charms of the landscape at this season, but it is also one of those peculiar provisions of nature, in which she has concealed her benevolence. While it affords protection to plants and animals, and to the embryos of insects now buried under the surface of the soil, it supplies in a measure by its whiteness, that deficiency of light which, during the winter solstice, is so painfully felt. If it were black, it would be melted by the first rays of the sun that shine upon it, and frozen in his absence into solid masses of ice, which would be greatly injurious to herbs and shrubs. Hence, while the snow protects animal and vegetable life, that exists in a hybernating state in the bosom of the soil, and prevents the superficial heat of the earth from being radiated into the atmosphere, the whiteness of the snow preserves the snow itself, until the warmth of a new season is

sufficient to give life to the objects that slumber beneath.

Besides the pleasing objects already described as peculiar to the season, there are many beautiful appearances formed by the freezing of waters and the crystallization of vapors, which one can never cease to examine with delight. One of the most brilliant spectacles of this kind is exhibited on a frosty morning, after the prevalence of a damp sea-breeze. The crystals, almost imperceptibly minute, are distributed like the delicate filaments of the microscopic mosses, over the withered herbs and leafless shrubbery, creating a sort of mimic vegetation in the late abodes of the flowers. Vast sheets of thin ice overspread the plains, beneath which the water has sunk into the earth, leaving the vacant spots of a pure whiteness, and forming hundreds of little fairy circles, of a peculiarly fantastic appearance. The ferns and sedges that lift up their bended blades and feathers through the plates of ice, coated with millions of crystals, resemble, while sparkling in the rays of the sun, the finest jewelry. After a damp and frosty night, these appearances are singularly beautiful, and all the branches of the trees glitter with them, as if surrounded with a network of diamonds.

These exhibitions of frostwork are still more magnificent at waterfalls, where a constant vapor arises with the spray, and deposits upon the icicles that hang from the projecting rocks, a plumage resembling the finest ermine. Some of the icicles, by a constant accumulation of water, which is always dripping from the crags, have attained the size of pillars, that seem almost to support the shelving rocks from which they are sus-

pended. The foam of the water has been frozen into large white masses, like a snow bank in appearance, but as solid as ice. The shrubs, that project from the crevices of the rocks, are clad in a full armor of variegated icicles; and when the slanting rays of the sun penetrate into these recesses, they illuminate them with a dazzling and unearthly splendor; and it seems as if the nymphs, that sit by these fountains, had decorated them as the portals to that inner temple of nature, whence are the issues of all that is lovely and beautiful on earth.

Thus, when all the delightful objects of summer have perished, endless sources of amusement and delight are still provided for the mind and the senses. Though the singing-bird has fled from the orchard, and the rustling of green leaves is heard no longer in the haunts of the little mountain streams, there are still many things to attract attention, by their beauty or their sublimity. Whether we view the frosts that decorate the herbage in the morning, or the widespread loveliness of the snow on a moonlight evening, the sublimity of heaven seems to rest upon the face of the earth, and we behold with rapt emotions every terrestrial scene. The universe, full of these harmonies, yields never-ending themes for study and meditation, to absorb and delight the mind that is ever searching after knowledge, and to raise the soul above the clods of the valley, to that invisible power that dwells throughout all space.

I never listen to the shrill voice of the woodpecker, within the deep shelters of the forest, or to the lively notes of the chickadee, which alternate with the sound of winds among the dry rustling leaves, without feeling a sudden and delightful transport. I cannot help indulging the fancy, that nature has purposely endowed

these active birds with a hardihood almost miraculous, to endure the severity of winter, that they might always remain to cheer the loneliness of these wintry solitudes. For no clime or season has nature omitted to provide blessings for those who are willing to receive them, and in winter wheresoever we turn, we find a thousand pleasant recompenses for our privations. The Naiad still sits by her fountain, at the foot of the valley, distributing her favors to the husbandman and his flocks; and the echoes still repeat their voices from the summits of the hills, and send them over the plains, with multiplied reverberations, to cheer the hearts of all living creatures.

III.

A COLD DAY.

ALL night have we been listening to the fresh blowing of the winds, and dreading an encounter with the cold that was to await us in the morning. Day has dawned, and the sky and atmosphere are as clear as the ethereal space between the heavens and the earth. The sun's broad disk is already above the horizon; but his rays dimly penetrate through the window panes, almost opaque with a thick coating of frost. As they struggle through this frostwork, thousands of beautiful configurations are cast upon the opposite ceiling, which are in a constant wavering motion. The sunbeams, as bright as a perfectly pellucid atmosphere can make them, are rendered powerless by the cold winds that bind them in their embraces.

The mercury has sunk below zero. The fire that is blazing upon the hearth sends no heat into the room; and the whole family gather round it in a semicircle, scorching themselves in a vain effort to obtain warmth. We go to our tasks, but we cannot pursue them. A freezing cold settles all around us, and drives us constantly to the fire. The needle drops from the hand of the seamstress, and the penman can scarcely make his

mark. The latches of the doors fasten upon the hands, as we attempt to open them. Every thing we take into our hands is like a mass of indissoluble ice. The whole business of the day is to keep ourselves from freezing. There is no ceremony in the house; all the inmates gather round the fire, and talk of nothing but the weather.

In the almost deserted streets we see no loitering at corners, and no gathering in the porches of the public-houses. Every one is hurrying onward, with face averted from the wind, his garments muffled closely around him, and he hardly deigns to recognize a passing acquaintance; or, if he be saluted, to make him a reply, in his haste to get to his journey's end. All are rapidly moving; even the most indolent seem to be suddenly capable of speed. The loaded teams that pass along the streets, are creaking like a band of musical instruments. The cattle are whitened with frost, and long beards of icicles are hanging from their chins.

The earth is white with snow, and the sun casts a bright but ineffectual beam over the wide glittering plain. Not a single crystal of hoarfrost melts upon the window-glass, so powerless are the sun's rays; but it accumulates all the day, until the glass has lost its transparency. Long icicles have made their appearance suddenly, dependent from different parts of the roof. All the eaves of the houses are fringed with these icicles, of various lengths, glittering like so many precious jewels, in the light of the sun. Smaller ones are hanging from the branches of the trees, and wide glistening sheets of ice have incrustated the springy sides of the hills.

There is a long volume of fog rolled in heaps upon

the surface of the bay, that seems to bound the horizon. Such a fog always denotes an intense cold. It is formed from the steam that may be seen issuing from the brink of the waters, just beyond the ice that girds the shore. Often during the day, a sleety snow, scarcely visible, on account of the minuteness of the crystals, will pour down from the skies, making the cutting blast still more severe, as it beats against the face and eyes of the traveller. At such times, it may be observed that the sky is not perfectly transparent, being dimmed by this sleet, which resembles a thin cloud of dust rather than of vapor. This phenomenon is caused by the steam which has risen from the ocean, in an invisible form, and crystallized as it ascended into the atmosphere.

On this day many a little bird will perish in the forest, struck by a shaft from the inclement skies; and the fishes that swim in the shallow waters will be imbedded, like petrifications, in the ice; for all the little rivulets are frozen, and their gurgling is not heard beneath the snows. The crows, and jays, and other winter birds are almost silent in the woods, and the bleating of flocks is not heard upon the hills. No living creature dares come forth to an encounter with the winds. All nature is still, save the fresh biting blast that is sweeping over the earth, and striking all living things with the stillness and coldness of death.

The poultry in the yards are gathered together in sunny corners, or under the shelter of a fence, apparently torpid. Here and there is a scattering one, moping around the door step, with its feathers frizzled, and its limbs almost too benumbed to support its weight. When the door is opened, they suddenly arouse from their torpidity, and then sink back again to their retreat.

The only comfort among the brute creation is enjoyed by the cattle within the barns, and the sheep within their fold.

The sun is drawing near his decline, but no beautiful colors surround his setting. The sky is perfectly blue over our heads, and a grayish circle binds the horizon, illuminated with a kind of yellow light, save in the close vicinity of the bay, where the rising vapor has formed a girdle of purple haze dimly fringed with the hues of the rainbow. No clouds are in the atmosphere, for its intense coldness precipitates the vapor into crystals, that fall to the earth ere it has arrived at any considerable height. Every thing is still, save the winds that whistle through the doors and crevices, and clatter among the stiff and frozen branches of the trees.

It is evening. The doors and windows are tightly closed; the hearths of the dwelling-houses are heaped with fuel, and all the villagers are assembled around their firesides. The windows, at this time, exhibit a magnificent appearance as we pass them on the outside, while the lamps are glittering from within, through their myriad configurations of frost. The window panes resemble so many pictured glasses; and while the forms of objects within cannot be seen, the lamps twinkle through the frostwork, and cast upon the traveller a beautiful and variegated light.

IV.

SOUNDS FROM INANIMATE NATURE.

NATURE in every scene and situation has established certain sounds which are indicative of its character. The sounds we hear in the hollow dells among the mountains are unlike those of the open plains; and the echoes of the sea-shore repeat sounds that are never reverberated among the inland valleys. There are many species of singing birds within the solitudes of a forest, which are seldom heard or seen in our orchards or gardens. In the mind of one who has been early accustomed to the wild woods, the warbling of these solitary birds is pleasantly connected with their stillness and their grandeur. Besides the singing of birds and the chirping of insects, there are voices from inanimate nature, which are full of pleasing suggestions. The murmuring of winds and the rustling of foliage, the gurgling of streams and the bubbling of fountains, come to our ears like the music of our early days, accompanied by many agreeable fancies. A stream rolling over a rough declivity, a fountain bubbling up from a subterranean hollow, produce sounds suggestive of fragrant summer arbors, of cool retreats, and all their delightful accompaniments.

The roar of a waterfall, when constantly near us, is disagreeable; but the purling of a rill, if not music, is something very nearly allied to it. The most agreeable expression of the noise of waters is their animation. They give life to the scenes around us, like the voices of birds and insects. In winter, especially, they make an agreeable interruption of the stillness; and remind us, that during the slumber of all visible things, some hidden powers are still guiding the operations of nature. The rapids produced by a small stream flowing over a gentle declivity of rocks yield, perhaps, the most expressive sound of waters, unless we except the distant roar of waves, as they are dashed upon the shore of the sea. The last, being intermittent, is preferable to the roar of a waterfall, which is tiresomely incessant. Nearly all the sounds made by water are agreeable, and cannot be multiplied without increasing the delightful influences of the place and the season.

Besides the pleasant sounds that come from water, in all its variety of shapes and movements, we must not omit to mention those which are produced by winds, as they pass through the branches and foliage of trees and shrubbery. The colors of their leaves, and the glittering light from their more or less refractive surfaces, do not differ more than the modifications of sound produced from them by the passing breezes. Every tree may be said, when agitated by the winds, to have a voice peculiar to itself, and capable of exciting the most agreeable sensations. The lofty branches of pines, when swayed by the wind, emit a sound like the murmuring of distant waters, and inspire a soothing melancholy like that inspired by the continual twilight that reigns within their solitudes. The leaves of the poplar, proverbial for their tremulous motion, produce a

more cheerful sound, corresponding with the gayety of summer, and harmonizing with the more lively scenes around them. Every tree and shrub is a delicate musical instrument, whose notes remind us of the character of their foliage, and of the season of the year, — from the mellow harmony of the willow trees in summer, to the sharp rustling of the dry oak leaf that tells us of the arrival of winter.

Each season of the year has its peculiar melodies, besides those proceeding from the animated creation. In the opening of the year, when the leaves are tender and pliable, there is a mellowness in the sound of the breezes, as if they felt the voluptuous influence of spring. Nature then softens all the sounds from inanimate things, as if to avoid making any harsh discords with the anthem that issues from the streams and woodlands, vocal with the songs of millions of happy creatures. The echoes also repeat less distinctly the multitudinous notes of birds, insects, and other creeping things. To the echoes, spring and summer are seasons of comparative rest, save those which reside among the rocks of the desert, or among the dells of the craggy sea-shore. Here, sitting invisibly in their retreats, are they ever responding to those sorrowful sounds that are borne upon the waves, as they sullenly recount the perils and accidents of the great deep.

After the severe frosts of autumn, the winds become shriller, as they pass over the naked reeds and rushes, and through the leafless branches of the trees, and there is a familiar sadness in their murmurs, as they whirl among the dry rustling leaves. When winter has arrived and enshrouded all the landscape in a winding-sheet of snow, the echoes once more venture out upon the open plain, and repeat, with unusual distinctness,

the miscellaneous sounds from wood, village, and farm. During winter they enjoy a long holiday of freedom, and show no sympathy with the desolate appearance of nature. They hold a laughing revelry in the haunts of the Dryad,* who sits sad and disconsolate in her now unsheltered retreats, where the leafless boughs scarcely protect her from the shivering wind, or shade her from the cold icy beams of the moon.

At this time our ears are greeted by the sound of the woodman's axe, that comes with multiplied reverberations through the solitude of the forest. Though one of the most cheerful of all sounds, so far as it reminds us of the presence of human beings in these solitary places, yet it is sadly suggestive of the fall of venerable woods, and of those changes in the face of nature which we cannot witness without regret. With a more unmixed cheerfulness do we listen to the hammering of the woodpecker upon some hollow tree in the wood, and to the creaking of the dry branches which are partly severed from the trunk of the tree, as they swing to and fro in the wind.

But when the sun gains a few more degrees in his meridian height, and the snow begins to disappear under the fervor of his beams, then do the sounds from the dropping eaves, and the clash of falling icicles from the boughs of the orchard trees, afford a pleasant sensation of the grateful change which has already commenced; and the utterance of these vernal promises suddenly awakens all the delightful anticipation of birds and flowers. The moaning of the winds has been plainly softened by the changes of the season, and the

* The Dryad, in modern mythology, is the fanciful impersonation of all animal life in the woods.

summer zephyrs that occasionally pay us a short visit from the south, and signalize their coming by the crimsoned dews at sunrise, let loose a thousand rills that make a lively babbling music, as they leap down the hill-side into the valleys. Yet of all these sounds from inanimate nature, there is not one but is hallowed by some glad or tender sentiment of which it is suggestive; and we have but to yield our hearts to their influences to feel that for the ear as well as for the eye, nature has provided an endless store of pleasures.

I believe that the majority of agreeable sounds from the inanimate world owe their charm to their power of gently exciting the emotion of melancholy. Our minds are constructed with such a benevolent regard to our happiness, that all the feelings of the heart, including even those of a painful sort, are capable, under certain states or degrees of excitement, of becoming a source of agreeable sensations. Such is the memory of past pleasures, that brings with it a species of melancholy which is a luxury to all persons of refined sensibility. The murmur of gentle gales among the trembling aspen leaves, or the noise of the hurricane upon the sea-shore, the roar of distant waters, the sighing of the wind as it flits by our windows or moans through the casement, have the power of exciting just enough of this sentiment to produce an agreeable state of the mind. Along with the melancholy they excite, there is something that tranquillizes the soul and exalts it above the mere pleasures of sense.

It is this power of producing the sentiment of melancholy that causes the sound of rain to yield pleasure to the majority of minds. The pattering of rain upon the windows, but more particularly on the roof of a house under which we are sitting, is attended with a singular

charm. The more violent the rain, if its violence be not sufficient to cause alarm, the more profound is the emotion that springs from it. There are few persons who do not recollect, with a most agreeable sense of past delight, some adventure of a shower that obliged them, on a journey, to take shelter under a rustic roof by the way-side. The pleasure produced by the sight and sound of the rain, under this retreat, often comes more delightfully to our remembrance than all the sunshiny adventures of the day. But in order to be affected in the most agreeable manner by the sound of rain, it is necessary to be in the company of those whom we love, and to know at the same time that the objects of our care are within doors, and to be ignorant of any one's exposure to its violence. From this consciousness of security comes perhaps half the pleasure awakened by the sound of rain; but this I am confident would not account for the whole effect.

The question has often been argued, why we delight in witnessing from a place of security, a ship buffeting the waves in a storm. This pleasure can arise only from the excitement of hoping for the final deliverance of the vessel and her crew, and of watching the progress of the sufferers while they are striving to reach the harbor. It does not arise from contrasting our own safety with the dangers to which they are exposed. On the contrary, should we behold a certain prospect of their destruction, we should no longer take any pleasure in the sight. But the view of a storm is pleasing, when we are ourselves, and believe others to be, in a place of safety. Then do we listen with intense delight to the voice of winds and waters as they contend with the demon of the storm, and the awful warring of the elements excites the most sublime sensations,

unalloyed with any painful anxiety for the safety of a fellow-being.

During a thunderstorm, the thunder is in most cases too terrific to allow one to feel a tranquil enjoyment of the occasion. Perhaps there is no sound in the world which is so pleasantly modified by distance. Some minutes before the commencement of a thunderstorm, there is a perfect stillness of the atmosphere which is fearfully ominous of the approaching tempest. It follows the first enshrouding of daylight in the clouds which are gathering slowly over our heads, as they come up from the western horizon. It is at such a time that the sullen moan of the thunder, far down, as it were, below the belt of the hemisphere, is peculiarly solemn and impressive, and more productive of the emotion of sublimity than when its crash is heard directly over our heads.

Thunder is evidently heard with different emotions, when it proceeds from the clouds which are rising towards us, and when it proceeds from those which have already settled down in the east, after the storm has passed away. The consciousness that the one indicates a rising storm renders it strongly suggestive of the perils we are soon to encounter, and adds intensity to the feelings with which we contemplate it. When we are in the midst of a violent thunderstorm, we feel the emotion of fear rather than that of sublimity. An uncomfortable amount of anxiety destroys that tranquillity of mind which is necessary for the full enjoyment of the sublime as well as the beautiful scenes of nature.

But it is pleasant after the terrors of the storm have ceased, when the blue sky in the west begins to peer in dim streaks, through the misty and luminous atmos-

phere, to watch the lightnings from the window, as they play down the dark clouds in the eastern horizon, and to listen to the rumblings of the thunder as it commences loudly over our head, and dies away almost like the roaring of waves in a distant part of the heavens. Then do we contemplate the spectacle with a grateful feeling of relief from the fears that lately agitated the mind, and surrender our souls to all the influences naturally awakened by a mingled scene of beauty and grandeur.

The emotion of sublimity is more powerfully excited by any circumstance that adds mystery to the scene, or the sounds we may be contemplating. For this reason any sound which resembles that of an earthquake impresses the mind at once with a feeling of awe, however insignificant its origin. The wailing of winds through the crevices of the doors and windows owes its effect, in a great measure, to this principle of mystery, and, especially to the young or the superstitious, often becomes a source of sublimity. Hence the power of the dusky shapes of twilight to produce terror, and hence the booming of a cannon over a distance that renders its identity uncertain, and prolongs the sound by hollow reverberations, causes in the hearers a breathless attention, as to something ominous of danger. We may thus explain why all sounds are so suggestive in the stillness of the night: the rustling of a zephyr as it glides half noiselessly through the foliage of the trees; a few scarce but heavy drops of rain from a passing cloud, that give the signal of an approaching shower; the footfall of a solitary passenger in the street; the tinkling of a cow bell, heard occasionally as the creature changes her position under a tree in a neighboring field;—all these sounds are dependent on the stillness

and darkness of the night for their peculiar influence on the mind.

It is evident that the charm of all these sounds proceeds from the imagination. A person who has not cultivated this faculty is dead to a thousand pleasures from this source, that form a considerable portion of the happiness of the man of superior intellect. Music has no advantage over other sounds, except in its greater power to act upon the imagination. To appreciate the charm of musical notes, or to perceive the beauty of an elegant building or of splendid tapestry, requires but little mental culture. But to be susceptible of pleasure from what are commonly regarded as indifferent sounds, or indifferent sights, is the meed of those who have cherished the higher faculties and the better feelings of their nature. To such persons the world is full of suggestive sounds as well as of suggestive sights, and not the whisper of a breeze or the murmur of a wave but is in unison with some chord in their memory or their imagination.

V.

FEBRUARY.



I AM no lover of cold weather; and feel more contented, when the sultry heats of summer oblige me to seek the refreshing sea-breezes, beneath a willow tree on the margin of the sea-shore, than when the cold blasts of winter drive me into the house, to take shelter by the fireside. But there are days in winter, when the wind blows gently from the south-west, which are attended with pleasurable feelings, seldom experienced in the most delightful summer weather. I have already spoken of the sublimity of a winter prospect, of the charms of a snowy landscape, by sunlight and by moonlight, and of other natural beauties, which are produced by frost and ice. It remains to speak of some of those phenomena, which are conspicuous during warm and sunny days in winter, when the weather seems to be that of a different climate. Whether the delightful influence of these halcyon days arises from a physical cause, or whether it is the result of contrast with the cold, that has so long kept one imprisoned, I cannot determine. But when I review in memory the rural rambles of former years, my winter walks on these

delightful days, will always crowd most sweetly and vividly upon my recollection.

After a long confinement within doors, our feelings are keenly alive to agreeable impressions from rural sights and sounds, which are associated with the pleasures of the past summer. Then does the sight of a green arbor in the woods, or a green plat in the valley, affect one as I can imagine the weary traveller in the desert is affected, upon meeting an oasis, in the midst of the drifting sands. The melancholy that attends a ramble in the autumn has passed from us, and we now come forth, during the sleep of vegetation, and in the general hush of animated things, with feelings allied to the cheerfulness that inspires the mind, when the little song-sparrow pours out his early lays of gladness to the first bright morning in spring. Some blessing comes from every sacrifice, and some recompense for every privation. Thus does the darkness of night prepare us to welcome with gladness the dawn of a new morning. The charm of life proceeds from these vicissitudes, and we are capable of no new enjoyment until we have rested from pleasure.

I have often taken advantage of one of these serene days of winter, to ramble in the woods. Every sound I hear at such a time is music, though it be but the cow-bell's chime, the stroke of the woodman's axe, or the crash of some tall tree, just falling to the ground. Sometimes during this season of calm sunshine, the little squirrels will come forth from their retreats; and in the echoing silence of the woods, we may hear their rustling leap among the dry oak leaves, their occasional chirrup, and the dropping of nutshells from the lofty branches of the hickory. There is music in all the echoes that break the stillness of the scenes around; in the cawing of the

raven, the scream of the jay, or the quick hammering of the woodpecker upon the hollow trunk of some ancient standard of the forest. All these sounds are endued with a pleasing cadence, and with them are associated some of my most agreeable recollections of nature.

The orchards at this time are frequented by woodpeckers of several species, so interesting on account of their lively motions, their brilliant plumage, distinguished from that of other birds by its contrasted colors, and on account of their curious habit of winding in and out, and over and under the branches of trees. Sometimes a multitude of these birds will assemble together, in company with the little chickadees, and make the woods resound with their querulous voices. Occasionally we arouse a bevy of whistling quails, which have maintained a snug silence under the juniper bushes, whither they resort for their fragrant repast of winter berries, and while sauntering onward, the whirring partridge startles one by its sudden flight, directly from under our feet.

The mild serenity of the weather; the fresh odors that arise from thawing vegetation; the beautiful haze that surrounds the horizon, reflecting all the colors of the rainbow; the lively chattering of poultry in the farm yard; the bleating of flocks and the lowing of kine; an occasional concert of crows in the neighboring wood; the checkered landscape of snow-drifts, rising out of the brown earth, and gleaming in the sunshine, and the soft white light that glows from distant hills and spires;—all these rural sights and sounds come upon the senses with a ravishment never felt in the fairest gardens or the most delightful clime. Now and then in the midst of this harmonious discord, as if to remind us of the past delights of summer, a solitary

song-sparrow, that still lingers about his former haunts, will open his little throat, and sing from some leafless thorn, one of his most simple and enchanting lays.

But in winter, we are seldom favored in succession, with many of these delightful days. They appear just often enough to save us from an utter forgetfulness of nature, like an occasional visit from an absent friend. At such times, all creatures take advantage of the fine weather to forage the woods and pastures, and supply their famishing wants; and one of the pleasant occupations of our leisure, consists in tracing to their haunts the different species of birds, that still sojourn with us, like friends in trouble and adversity. These harmless creatures often suffer greatly with famine, many of them dying of starvation as well as of cold; and it is the part of benevolence to feed them, and look out for their protection. Quails and robins remain in our woods throughout the winter, feeding on berries, seeds, and the gleanings of corn fields. An unusual quantity of snow may deprive them of these resources; and man, the lord of creation, should prove himself worthy of his sovereignty, by protecting these innocent wanderers, for whom nature, under all circumstances, has not provided.

Flocks of sparrows and snow-birds are often seen hovering around our dwellings, and by their cheerful twittering, seem to be asking alms of the inmates. They may be seen timidly feeding with the poultry, or pecking at the windowglass, for something that glistens on the inner side of the pane. The humane and considerate are in the habit of strewing seeds and crumbs of bread on the fences, and in the footpaths, where they may find them and relieve their hunger. And what do we by such acts, but divide with others a

portion of that bounty, which heaven has lent us only for our using, and which can never prove our blessing, unless we make a kind and benevolent disposal of it, to those who are in suffering and want?

I must not omit to enumerate, among the various attractions of winter, the frostwork on the windows, the apt emblem of the romantic hopes of our early youth. All vegetation in summer presents not the variety of forms which we may behold in these beautiful configurations upon the windowglass. The mornings which are most remarkable for this curious pencil work of nature, are such as follow a very cold and still night, after mild and thawing weather on the preceding day. When a boy, I used to delight in watching these frost-pictures, ere I arose in the morning, and felt no less pleasure in the sight than I have since found in the more magnificent scenes of nature. Nothing in the world seems so much like the work of enchantment; and it is not surprising that people of all ages have imagined that the elements were inhabited by spirits, whose supernatural skill would account for those numberless beauties which attract the sight, in the least, as well as in the greatest operations of the invisible artist.

Another remarkable appearance occasionally observed in the woods in winter, is caused by showers of misty rain, succeeding a very cold day, and followed by another equally cold. These fantastic exhibitions, depending on a peculiar train of circumstances for their origin, do not occur every year. As the rain descends in fine vaporous particles, the frost that is imbedded in the twigs and branches of the trees, causes the rain to congeal about them, until they are covered with an incrustation of ice. The weather during the descent of this fine rain, must be as cold as possible, without freez-

ing it on its passage. The crystals thus formed around the twigs, and the icicles hanging by thousands from the buds and extremities of the branches, form so many prisms, which by refracting the rays of the sun, as they gleam through the trees, present all the colors of the rainbow, and like the beads in a kaleidoscope, yield a new combination of forms and hues, with every change in the position of the beholder.

When the sun is bright, and the air is sufficiently cold to prevent the melting of the icicles, and a gentle wind is blowing, the twigs are kept in constant agitation, sparkling like the gems in the fringe and tassels of a chandelier. A spectacle so beautiful amidst the desolation of winter scenery, becomes immediately attractive to every beholder. When the trees are full of blossoms, though more interesting to the true lover of nature, they have less of that glittering splendor which is more productive of the mere physical sensation of beauty.

These incrustations of the forest, unless they overload and break down the trees, are not unproductive of benefit. By their weight and brittleness they cause the greater part of the dry and rotten twigs to break off and fall to the ground. Hence they may be regarded as so many pruning instruments, provided by nature, for the purpose of separating the decayed and useless branches from the tree, and other substances which are an impediment to its growth. While the sound twigs are enabled by their elasticity to yield to the force of the winds, the dry twigs snap off with the icicles as often as they are shaken by the breeze. After one of these operations of nature, you may find large quantities of little dry branches lying under the trees, as thickly spread as the fallen leaves in November. These incrustations produce another beneficial effect upon the

trees, by peeling off the dry bark and lichens to which they adhere, thus acting as the scraper of the orchardist. After this, the farmers predict an abundant harvest of fruit; and the thorough pruning and scraping thus performed for the trees, undoubtedly contributes to this effect.

But while descanting upon the appearances of nature during the present season, we are reminded of the pleasures of the domestic fireside. All such enjoyments are intimately associated with rural recreations; and it seems to me that he alone who possesses that humble mind and unvitiated taste which enables him to enjoy the spectacle of beauty and sublimity that is opened in the landscape, is fitted for the full enjoyment of the pleasures of the social hearth. Both of these recreations are alike innocent and invigorating to the mind and the health. Above all other kinds of pleasures are they unattended by any degrading and corrupting circumstances. Such are the blessings which a beneficent providence has reserved for the humble and intelligent poor. While the fashionable and the vain are striving after unattainable happiness in the gay saloon, or gazing at costly pictures in a gallery of paintings, the poor man is enjoying a little heaven in his own family circle, or gazing upon that noble picture presented by nature,—the handiwork of the Deity, who sits in the heavens, and makes the earth show forth the wonders of his skill.

At present, when the wintry winds are lurking around our dwellings, and the tempest is lying in ambush under the clouded horizon, let us who live in comfort and security, and have wherewithal we may benefit our neighbors, not forget those who are borne down by poverty. This is the time when all the hardships of

the poor are peculiarly distressing; when even the honest poor may be driven to desperation, and constrained to become disobedient to the moral law, because their fellow men have been unmindful of the law of charity. Miserable is the man whose heart is so hard that he thinks not nor cares not for these sufferers. The selfishness of such a man is to him an unceasing draught of bitterness; while the benevolence of the charitable man kindles a flame within his breast that warms his whole soul with a glow of satisfaction, and guides him at all times and seasons, into the paths of virtue and happiness.

VI.

R U I N S .



To all whose minds have received an ordinary amount of cultivation, there are few objects more interesting than the remains of antiquity, — whether, like those of Greece and Rome, they call up the history of the noblest works of art and deeds of renown, or like those of Egypt, they carry back the mind to the age of primeval superstition, or like the ruins of the earth itself, they read the story of the antediluvian periods, before the present races of animals were created. In our own country where these relics of ancient times, excepting those of a geological description, are almost unknown, the people in general can hardly sympathize with that love of ruins, which is almost a passion with some of the inhabitants of the Old World. We have no ruined castles to remind us of ancient baronial splendor, and of the perils and heroism of the feudal ages; no remains of gorgeous temples or triumphal arches, to record the deeds of a past generation. The ancient history of this continent lives chiefly in tradition; and the traveller, who happens to discover one of the few relics of ancient American architecture, seeks in vain for any record that will explain its character or design.

Yet the absence of the ruins of antiquity may have a tendency to render our people more alive to impressions from those of a more humble description and of recent origin which abound in all places. When strolling over the scenes of our own land, who has not often stopped to ponder over the ruins of some old dwelling-house, and to bring before the mind the possible history of its inmates? Here we perceive the completion of a domestic romance. A series of adventures has been there commenced, continued, and brought to an end. Imagination is free to indulge itself in making up the history of the human beings who have lived and died there, and of the romantic adventures which have there been enacted. We do not always endeavor to read this history; but there is a shadowy conception of something connected with the old crumbling walls that would be striking and romantic. To this pleasing occupation of the fancy may undoubtedly be ascribed a portion of the interest always excited by a view of a ruined or deserted house. A still deeper effect is produced by the sight of a mouldering temple, or a ruined castle, which are associated with deeds and events of greater magnitude.

I am disposed to attribute the pleasure arising from the contemplation of ruins to a truly noble affection of the human soul, to a veneration of the past, and to a longing to recover the story of bygone ages. A ruin is delightful as the scene of some old tradition, a specimen of ancient art and magnificence, and as evidence of the truth of history. Nothing, indeed, serves to place so vividly before the mind the picture of any historic event as the ivied and dilapidated walls of the building in which it occurred. There is likewise an emotion of cheerful melancholy which is awakened by viewing a

pile of ruins, an old house or an old church, venerable with the mosses of time and decay. There are other objects, scenes, and situations that produce similar effects upon the mind, such as a sight of the ocean when agitated by a tempest, from a place of security. A beacon and a light-house belong to the same class of objects; and above all, a monument by the sea-shore, erected to commemorate some remarkable shipwreck, awakens a train of melancholy reflections nearly allied to the sentiment of ruins. But it is not every scene of ruins that is capable of yielding pleasure to the beholder. There is nothing agreeable in a view of the embers of a wide conflagration, except the gratification of the curiosity. Such a spectacle brings to the mind only the idea of destruction and misfortune, which is painful, and there is nothing connected with it to awaken any counteracting sentiment. On the other hand, every mind is agreeably affected by the sight of an old house, no longer the habitation of man, serving only as the day retreat of the owl, and the fancied residence of beings of the invisible world. There is a propensity among men to associate every ruined edifice, however great or humble, with some romance or superstition; and our own people, who have no magnificent ruins, indulge the sentiment which is awakened by them, in their legends of haunted houses, and by identifying these superstitions with every deserted habitation.

It is worthy of remark that although a cottage is more poetical than a palace, when each is in a perfect condition—a ruined palace is more poetical than a ruined cottage. A certain amount of grandeur must be associated with a ruin to render it very effective. After a family have deserted their habitation of luxury and splendor, when they themselves have gone down to

the grave, and their old mansion is crumbling with the ravages of time, we lose all that invidious feeling which often prevents us from sympathizing with the wealthy when they are living. They are now on a level with the humblest cottagers, and we look upon their ruined abode with a feeling of regret for all the elegance and greatness that have passed away. Indeed, the more noble and magnificent the edifice in its original state, the deeper is the emotion with which we contemplate its ruins. This circumstance yields a singular charm to the remains of the ancient Grecian temples, and to those Gothic castles, that add such a romantic character to certain European landscapes.

Some of the interesting accompaniments of a ruined building are the plants which are found clustering around its old roof and walls. Nature always decorates what time has destroyed, and when the ornaments of art have crumbled, she rears in their place garlands from her own wilds, and the building, no longer beautiful, is adorned with the greenness of vegetation. Hence certain plants have become intimately allied with ruins, and derive from this alliance a peculiarly romantic interest. Such are the mosses and lichens, the evergreen ferns, the creeper, and the most of the saxatile plants in America; and in Europe, the yellow wall-flower, the chenopody, and the ivy.

In every ruin, therefore, we see the commencement of a new and beautiful creation. When a tree has fallen and has begun to decay, an infinite host of curious and delicate plants, of the simplest vegetable forms, are fostered upon the surface of its trunk. Mushrooms of every description spring out from the inner bark, and lichens and mosses, as various in their hues as they are delicate in their forms, decorate all the outside. Insects

which, under the magnifying glass, exhibit the various plumes and glittering ornaments of the most brilliant birds and butterflies, live under the protection of these minute plants, as the larger animals find shelter in a forest of trees. When the timber has entirely perished, and has become assimilated with the soil, other hosts of plants of a higher order take the place of the former, until new forests have reared their branches over the ruins of those of a preceding age. Rocks, continents, and worlds are subject to the same decay, and the same ultimate renovation. Thus the whole system of the universe is but an infinite series of permutations and combinations, all the atoms, amidst apparent chaos, moving in the most mathematical order, and gradually resolving themselves into organized forms, infinite in their numbers and arrangements.

In this country we have no classic ruins. The relics of the ancient structures of the aborigines can hardly awaken a romantic sentiment. We cannot associate with them any agreeable historic reminiscences. We behold in them only the evidences of savage customs, unformed art, and a miserable superstition, which afford nothing to admire. No scenes are so well fitted as the ruins of a great and civilized nation, to inspire the mind with that contemplative habit which is the foundation of the poetical character. They fill the soul with noble conceptions, and serve to divert the thoughts from a consideration of mere personal interest, and turn them back upon the ages of chivalry and romance.

Nature has so constituted the mind as to enable it to convert all her scenes, under certain circumstances, into sources of pleasure. It is not the beautiful alone that affords these agreeable impressions; nor is it the cheerful scenes only among natural or artificial objects that

inspire a pleasing sentiment. While contemplating a scene of ruins, the mind may have glimpses of truths which are not revealed to us in the lessons of philosophy, and which excite indefinite hopes amidst apparent desolation. It is our power of deriving pleasure from these inexplicable sources that gives a pile of ruins half its charms. This mingled sentiment of hope and melancholy combines with almost all our ideas of beauty. On this account a deserted house interests the mind more than a splendid villa in its perfect condition; and a plain, overspread with classic ruins, more than a prospect of green meadows and highly ornamented gardens. It would be idle to assert that the human soul would take satisfaction in contemplating an object that is suggestive of its own dissolution. This love of ruins ought rather to be considered as so much evidence coming from them in favor of the infinite duration of the universe. They are evidence of the great age of the earth, and proof of its destination to exist during countless ages of the future. I wonder that our theologians have never deduced from this love of ruins, which is so universal, an argument for the immortality of the soul. It is evident that we do not instinctively regard them as proofs of mortality: but while we see in them the subjection of material forms to those changes which belong to every thing that is mortal, we look upon our own souls as lifted above any liability to these changes. Did we innately perceive in them proof that the mind that constructed these wonderful works of art, perished with them, we should turn away from them with a deep despondency, and endeavor to hide them from our sight. By a similar course of reasoning we may account for the pleasure which is experienced by musing among the tombs.

The scenes in our own land which are most nearly allied to ruins are the ancient rocks that gird our shores and give variety to our landscapes. They are, in fact, the ruins of an ancient world, existing probably before the human race had made their abode here. In these rocks the frosts of thousands of winters, and the lightnings of as many summers have made numerous fissures, and split them asunder in many places. We find the same species of saxatile and parasitic plants clustering about them which are found among the ruins of art. The forest trees have inserted their roots into their crevices, and oaks that have stood for centuries nod their heads over the brink of these precipices, and cast a gloomier shade into the valleys below. Nothing can be more affecting than some of these ruins of nature, that want only the historical associations connected with the ruins of temples and palaces, to render them equally interesting.

Man's natural love of mystery, and his proneness to indulge in that emotion of grandeur and infinity that flows from the sight of any thing involved in the dimness of remote ages of the past, are one cause of the intense interest felt in the study of geology. With a deep feeling of awe we trace the footprints of those unknown animals which were the denizens of a former world. The mind "is roused to profound contemplation at the sight of piles of rocks as high as the clouds, recumbent on a bed of fern, and at finding the remains of animals that once sported on the summits of other Alps, now buried beneath the very base and foundation of ours."

VII.

R O C K S .



It is not necessary that an object should be intrinsically beautiful, like a collection of water, to add a pleasing feature to the landscape. Though rocks, considered apart from nature, are unsightly objects, yet no scenery can be complete without them. To a prospect, they afford a variety which it would be difficult to obtain from any other objects. Without them there is a want of those sudden transitions from the smooth to the rough, from the level to the precipitous, from the beautiful to the wild, and from the tame to the expressive, which are essential to a perfect landscape. It is only among rocks that the evergreen ferns — those beautiful accompaniments of a rustic retreat — are found growing abundantly. There is no more beautiful sight than a series of almost perpendicular rocks, covered on all sides by ferns, with their peculiarly graceful foliage, and here and there a rill trickling down their sides, and forming channels through the evergreen mosses. The solitary glens formed by these rocks could not be imitated by any thing else; and their jutting precipices afford prospects unequalled by the gentle elevations in a rolling landscape. In a country where rocks are

wanting, the land rises and sinks in gradual declivities, and prospects are difficult to be obtained except from lofty elevations.

There is so much that is attractive in the abruptness of a rocky landscape, especially when covered with trees and other vegetation, that many authors have attributed their picturesque character to this rudeness and abruptness. I am inclined, on the other hand, to attribute this interesting expression to the manifest facility which these abrupt situations afford, not only for prospect, but also for pleasant secluded retreats. Large clefts, produced by the parting of the two sides of an enormous rock, furnish dells, often in themselves perfect gardens of wild flowers, bursting on the sight like an oasis in the middle of a rude waste. In these places there is always a remarkable verdure, as the rains that wash down their slopes conduct fertility to the soil at their base. A rocky landscape is always productive of a greater variety of flowers and shrubs than a plain or rolling country of similar soil and climate.

There are many plants whose native localities are the tops and sides of rocky cliffs and precipices. Such are the saxifrage, the cistus, the toad-flax, and the beautiful pedate violet. The graceful Canadian columbine is found mostly among the clefts of rocks, where, like a little tender animal, it nestles under their protection, and draws nourishment from the soil that has accumulated about the mossy knolls where it has taken root. To satisfy ourselves of the number and variety of plants that may grow spontaneously upon a single rock, let us construct one in fancy, thus enamelled by the hand of nature.

We will picture to ourselves a craggy precipice rising thirty or forty feet out of a wet meadow, and forming,

in its irregular ascent, several oblique and perpendicular sides, whose summits have collected several inches of soil upon their surface. A growth of pines and birches covers its summit, together with various shrubs, such as the whortleberry, the wood-pyrus, the spiræa, and the mountain andromeda. Here, too, the Dutch myrtle and the sweet fern mingle their fragrance with the terebinthine odors of the pines. The rocks, in the driest situations, are covered with a bedding of gray liverwort, which is a perfect hygrometer, breaking like glass under our footsteps, when the atmosphere is dry, but yielding like velvet, when it contains the least moisture. The cup-moss grows abundantly along with it, and, in moister situations, the green delicate hair-moss, which is the same that covers the roofs of very old buildings. The rain has washed down from the summit constant deposits from trees and shrubs, birds and quadrupeds, and formed a superficies of good soil on all parts of the rock where it could be retained. On the almost bare surface grows the beautiful feather grass, with its nodding plumes of purple flowers, supported only by the soil that has accumulated about its roots.

The mountain laurel luxuriates upon these natural terraces, of irregular size, by which we descend to the meadow at the base of the rock. But the mountain laurel, with its magnificent clusters of flowers, is not the most attractive object; for the little springs that issue from the crevices of the rock have called out a great variety of ferns and lycopodies, that cover its sides with their green foliage, like the tiles on the roof of a house. Some gnarled oaks and graceful beeches project from the sides of the cliff which is covered with innumerable vines. Besides the beautiful things that cluster at our feet, and the little winged inhabitants

natural to the situation, made attractive by their varied forms, colors, and motions, this rock gives additional extent to the prospect of the surrounding country, and affords one many different views from the various openings through its wood and shrubbery.

Such are the beauties and advantages multiplied about a mere rock. But in my description I have omitted to notice the grotto formed by the shelving of rocks, and so delightful to the traveller who seeks shelter from the sultry heat of noon, or to one who aims only to gratify a poetic imagination. Rocky scenery always suggests to the mind the various scenes and incidents of romantic adventure; and I believe the difficulties and dangers it presents to the traveller magnify the interest of the situation. I have often seen a whole party affected with an eager desire to obtain possession of a flower that was growing out of the summit of a rocky cliff. Each one would feel a similar desire to climb upon its sides and to obtain a resting-place upon its dangerous summit. All these circumstances, which in real nature stimulate the adventurous spirit, become picturesque when represented on canvas, by affording the same kind of stimulus to the imagination of the beholder. Hence the imaginative as well as the adventurous are equally delighted with this kind of scenery, that arouses the enterprise of the one and awakens the poetic feelings of the other. What do we care for a scene, however beautiful, which is so tame as to afford no exercise for the imagination? Rocks, by increasing the inequalities of the surface, proportionally multiply the ideas and images which are associated with landscape.

It is not an uninteresting inquiry why a prospect beheld from a rocky cliff or precipice yields us more

pleasure than the same beheld from an even slope. Is it the more agreeable when we partake of any such enjoyments, to be disconnected from the objects immediately around us? Or when standing upon a rock that projects from the surface of the ground, may we not experience an illusive feeling of elevation? In the town of Beverly are many grand and delightful views of the ocean, from different points on the neighboring hills and eminences. Some of these views are probably unsurpassed by the coast scenery in any part of the country. I have repeatedly observed that parties of pleasure, when making an excursion among these hills, are not satisfied with a view of the ocean and landscape, until they have beheld them from some elevated or projecting rock. There is probably a poetic feeling of isolation attending us when standing upon a rock, that increases those emotions, whether of beauty or sublimity, which are excited by the prospect.

Any one who has rambled over the bald hills that bound almost the whole northern shore of Massachusetts Bay, can bear witness to the power of these landscapes to magnify those sublime emotions that come from the aspect of desolation. They are felt, in these places, unaccompanied by that profound melancholy which must ever attend us when contemplating a wide scene of ruins. Here the appearance of desolation is sufficient to awaken a deep emotion of sublimity; but while surrounded with so many evidences of a fertile and prosperous country, we are equally affected with a sense of cheerful exaltation. I doubt whether the most beautiful garden in Europe would afford so much of the luxury of mental emotion, as a ramble over these bald hills affords to one whose mind is properly attuned for such enjoyments. It is evident that the hills with-

out the rocks would be destitute of the feature that yields them their principal charm. From the sight of the rocks also comes that feeling of alliance with past ages of the world, which tends greatly to elevate the mind with sentiments of grandeur.

The New England stonewall, as a portion of landscape scenery, is generally considered a deformity. Still it cannot be denied that the same lines of wooden fence would mar the beauty of the landscape a great deal more. On account of the loose manner in which the stones are piled one upon another, as well as the character of the materials, this wall harmonizes with the general aspect of nature more agreeably than any kind of wood-work or masonry. It seems to me less of a deformity than a hedge or any other kind of a fence, except in highly cultivated and ornamented grounds. In wild pastures and lands devoted to common agricultural purposes, the stonewall is the least exceptionable of any boundary mark that has yet been invented. A hedge in such places would present to the eye an intolerable formality.

One of the charms of the stonewall is the manifest ease with which it may be overleaped: it menaces no infringement upon our liberty. When we look abroad upon a landscape subdivided only by these long lines of loose stones, we feel no sense of constraint: the whole boundless range as well as prospect is ours. An appearance that cherishes this feeling of liberty is essential to the beauty of a landscape; for no man can thoroughly enjoy a scene from which he is excluded. Imagine to what extent the peculiar beauty of the ocean would be inarred, if certain portions were inclosed by a fence for the exclusive advantage of some proprietor! Fences are deformities of prospect which

we are obliged to use and to tolerate ; but of these the stonewall is one of the least exceptionable, inasmuch as it harmonizes with nature, and is expressive of that freedom which it affords to the traveller and the ram-
bler.

It may be remarked that no inconsiderable share of the interest added to a prospect by the presence of rocks, arises from their connection with the history of past ages of the world. They are indeed the monuments of the antediluvian ages, and no man who is acquainted with the commonly received geological facts, when wandering among these relics of the mysterious past, can fail to be inspired with those emotions of sublimity, which proceed no less from the wonders of science than from the bolder creations of poetry.

VIII.

OLD ROADS.



I CANNOT say that I am an admirer of what are commonly termed improvements, and seldom observe them without a feeling of regret, except in the very depth of the wilderness. More of the beauty of landscape is destroyed every year by attempts to beautify it, than by the ignorant woodman who cuts down his trees for the railroad or the ship-yard. There is a certain kind of beauty which ought to be cherished by the people of every land; but this should be done for the sake of the pleasure derived from the objects that produce it. As soon as we begin to cultivate a garden, or ornament a house or an inclosure, with the hope of dazzling the public eye, at that moment the spell is broken, and all the enchantment vanishes. There is something exceedingly delightful in the ornaments that have risen up spontaneously in those grounds, which, after they were once reduced to tillage, have been left for many years, in the primitive hands of nature. Vain are all our attempts to imitate these indescribable beauties, such as we find along the borders of an old rustic farm, by an old road-side, or a pasture that is overgrown with spontaneous shrubbery.

This kind of scenery is common in almost all those old roads which are not used as thoroughfares, but as avenues of communication between our small country villages. Our land is full of these rustic by-ways; and the rude scenery about them is more charming to my sight than the most highly ornamented landscapes which have been dressed by the hand of art. A part of their charm arises, undoubtedly, from their association in our minds, with the simplicity of habits that prevails among our rural population. But this is not all. I believe it arises chiefly from the absence of almost all decoration, save that which nature has planted with her own hands. Wherever we see a profusion of ornaments introduced by art, though they consist entirely of natural objects, we no longer feel the presence of nature's highest charm. Something very analogous to sunshine is shut out. The rural deities do not dwell there, and cannot inspire us with a fulness of satisfaction. It is difficult to explain the mystery; but when I am rambling the fields, or travelling over one of these old roads, with that sort of quiet rapture, with which we drift along in a boat, down a narrow stream, through the green woods in summer, — the very first highly artificial object I encounter which bears evidence of being put up for exhibition, dissolves the spell, — and I feel, all at once, as if I had stepped out of Paradise, into the land of worldlings and all their sordid vanities.

The beauty of these old roads does not consist in their crookedness, though it cannot be denied that this quality prevents their being tiresome, and adds variety to our prospect, by constantly changing our position. Neither does their beauty consist in their narrowness, though it will be admitted that this quality contributes to their pleasantness, by bringing their bushy side-walks

nearer together. Their principal charm consists in the character of their road sides, now overgrown with all that blended variety of herbs and shrubbery which we encounter in a wild pasture. We hear a great deal of complaint of these old roads, because they are crooked and narrow, and because our ancestors did not plant them with trees. But trees have grown up spontaneously in many places, sometimes forming knolls and coppices of inimitable beauty; and often an irregular row of trees and shrubs, of different species, adds a pleasing variety to the scenes.

And how much more delightful is a ride or a stroll through one of these old roads, than through the most highly ornamented suburbs of our cities, with their streets of more convenient width. The very neglect to which they have been left, on account of the small amount of travelling over them, has caused numberless beauties to spring up in their borders. In these places nature seems to have regained her sovereignty. The squirrel runs freely along the walls, and the hare may be seen peeping timidly out of her burrow at their foundation, or leaping across the street. The hazel bushes often form a sort of natural hedge-row, for whole furlongs; and the sparrow and the robin, and even some of the less familiar birds, build their nests in the green thickets of barberries, viburnums, cornels, and whortleberry bushes, that grow in irregular rows and tufts along the rough and varied embankments.

Near these old roads we seldom meet an artificial object that is made disagreeable by its manifest pretensions. Little one-story cottages are frequent with their green slope in front, and a maple or an elm that affords them shelter and shade. The old stonewall festooned with wild grape-vines, comes close up to their in-

closures; and on one side of the house the garden is seen with its unpretending neatness, its few morning-glories, trained up against the walls, its beds of scarlet runners, reared upon trellises, formed of the bended branches of the white birch, driven into the soil; its few rose-bushes of those beautiful kinds which have long been naturalized in our gardens;—when I behold these objects, in their Arcadian simplicity, I lose all faith in the magnificent splendors of princely gardens. I feel persuaded that in these humble scenes exists the highest kind of beauty; and that he is the happiest man who cares for no more embellishments than his own rustic family have added to the simple charms of nature.

Let us, therefore, carefully preserve these ancient winding roads, with all their primitive eccentricities. Let no modern vandalism, misnamed public economy, deprive the traveller of their pleasant advantages, by stopping up their beautiful curves, and building shorter cuts for economizing distance. Who that is journeying for pleasure is not delighted with them, as they pass on through pleasant valleys, under the brows of hills, along the banks of green rivers, or the borders of silvery lakes; now half way up some gentle eminence that commands a view of a neighboring village, or winding round a hill, and giving us a back view of the scenes we have just passed. They are no niggardly economists of time; but they seem as if purposely contrived to present to the eye of the traveller every thing that renders the country desirable to the sight; now leading us over miles bounded by old grey stonewalls, half covered with sweet briars, viburnums, and golden rods; then again through fragrant woods, under the brink of precipices, nodding with wild shrubbery, and seeming

to emulate the capricious windings of the stream, in its blue course among the hills. How pleasant when journeying, to enter a village by one of these gentle sweeps that gives one several glimpses of its scenes, in different aspects, before our arrival. How much indeed would be done for us by nature, if we did not in conformity with certain notions of improvement, constantly check her spontaneous efforts to cover the land with beauty.

IX.

MARCH.



TO the inhabitants of a variable climate like our own, the weather is at all times one of the most interesting themes of speculation: but at no period of the year does it come more directly home to our feelings than in March. We know that there is a new sign in the heavens, and the altitude of the sun in his meridian seems plainly to assure us of the comforts of the vernal season. But the aspect of the heavens is constantly changing, the winds ever veering, clouds alternating with sunshine, wind with calm, and rain with snow, so that we are never sure, on a bland morning in March, when the sun is shining almost with the fervor of summer, that we may not be overtaken by a snow-storm before noonday, or the cold of the arctic circle before sunset. Any one of the three winter months, though seldom otherwise than cold and stormy, may once in a few years be mild and pleasant from beginning to end: but March preserves the same variable and boisterous weather from year to year; and is the only month when day's harbingers never fulfil their promises; when the rosy-bosomed hours, that come up with the morning, and the fair sisters, that weave the garlands of evening, are all deceivers.

Though the present time is nominally the spring of the year, as yet there is not a flower in the fields or gardens, and the buds of the trees are hardly swollen with waking vegetation. The wild flowers are still buried under the snows and ices of winter, and the grass has begun to look green only under the southern protection of the walls and fences. Many of the early birds, following the southerly winds that occasionally prevail for a few days, and tempted by the bright sunshine of the season, have arrived from their winter haunts, and sing and chirp alternately, as if they were debating whether to remain here, or to return to a more genial clime. It is a singular instinct that prompts so many species of birds to leave their pleasant abiding places at the south, where every agreeable condition of climate, shelter, and provision for their wants is present, and press onward into the northern regions, before the rigors of winter have been subdued, and while they are still liable to perish with cold or starvation. Often with anxious compassion have I watched these little bewildered songsters, who have so unseasonably returned from the region of perpetual summer, when after commencing their morning lays, as if they believed the vernal promises of dawn, they were obliged to flee into the depths of the woods, to find a shelter from the driving snow-storm.

It may seem remarkable that, before vegetation has awakened, there should be a resuscitation of some of the insect tribes. But in warm, sheltered situations many small flies may be seen, either newly hatched, or revived by the heat of the sun. They do not seek food, but crawl about in dry places, sometimes rising into the air, and drowsily and awkwardly exercising their wings. So exposed is this class of animated things to the

mercy of climate, that nature has made them insusceptible of injury from the severest cold; and many species, though inclosed in masses of solid ice, may be revived by gradual heat, and fly abroad as gayly as if they had only been refreshed by sleep. But the period of life assigned to insects is very short, and before the arrival of winter, the brief and joyous life of nearly all species is terminated, and their offspring in an embryo state lie torpid until a new spring calls them into a wakeful existence.

Our climate being a discordant mixture of the weather of two opposite latitudes, pouring in alternately upon us, is the most variable and deceitful in the world. Alternating with each other, and crowding out the proper weather of this temperate latitude, and struggling, as it were, for the mastery, are two winds, one that sweeps across the Canadas, and brings hither the cold of the polar regions; the other that comes from the Gulf of Mexico, and brings hither the summer breezes of the tropics. No natural barrier is interposed to check their progress whenever any climatal influence urges them onward. The prevalence of a moderate temperature in this part of the country, during a calm, at all times, either in spring or autumn, proves this to be the true weather of our latitude. The north and south winds are intruders, that spoil the comfort we should otherwise enjoy in the open air, at all seasons, except the three months of winter. Our climate may, therefore, not unaptly be compared to a village that is peopled by a set of quiet and peaceable inhabitants, but is visited by troublesome people from the adjoining villages, who, by their quarrels with each other, keep it in a constant uproar, leaving the villagers only an occasional respite during their absence, when all again is quiet.

Hence if we have cold in March, it is a cold that will soon be succeeded by heat; if we have clouds, the darkness they bring will soon be succeeded by sunshine. We see none of those melancholy clouds, so common in the latter part of autumn, that remain for weeks brooding over the landscape, as if the heavens were hung in mourning for the departure of summer: none of that ominous darkness in the glens and the valleys, denoting that the sun has at length quietly surrendered to the frosty conqueror of the earth. Though March is colder, it has more light than November. The sun is daily increasing in power, and the snow that still remains on the earth renders the effect of his rays more brilliant and animating. The clouds at this season are seldom motionless; they are borne along rapidly by the brisk winds, now enveloping the landscape in gloom, then suddenly illuminating it with sunshine, and causing that constant play of light and shade which is peculiar to the early spring.

In March, we are not without occasional days of agreeable serenity; and at such times we begin to look about us, among the sheltered retreats in the woods and mountains, to watch the earliest budding of vegetation. Sometimes in the latter part of the month, under the slope of a hill that faces the meridian sun, and is sheltered by surrounding woods, we may discover the delicate blossoms of the ground laurel (*epigea repens*), and within the edge of the woods a few flowers of the early anemone (*hepatica triloba*). But these flowers, so early in the season, denote an unusual state of forwardness, and seldom make their appearance until after the middle of April. At such times, while sauntering about the fields, rejoicing in what seems to be the actual return of spring, the fierce north wind commences

his raging anew, drives one home by his attacks, and ere another morning arrives, the birds lie concealed in the depths of the woods, whither they have been driven by a snow-storm, and all hearts are again saddened by the universal aspect of winter.

The change that has taken place in the appearance of the sun at his rising, since the opening of this month, may be regarded as one of the usual indications of the reviving spring. The atmosphere, on clear mornings, is more heavily loaded with vapors than is usual at the same hour in winter. The exhalations of the preceding day have been descending in frosty dews by night upon the plains, and seem to be gathered thickly about the horizon, and yield to the first beams of the sun a tint of purple and violet, like the dawn of a summer morning. The sun, in midwinter, when there are no vapors resting on the lakes and meadows, the cold winds having frozen every source of exhaling moisture, rises suddenly into a pure, transparent atmosphere. But as spring advances, and the sun rises higher into the zenith, the evaporation increases, the atmosphere, in the morning, becomes charged with prismatic vapors, and every mead and valley is crowned at sunrise with wreaths of mist, adorned with the hues of the rainbow. Hence the crimson haze that accompanies the dawn, denotes that the icy fountains are unlocked, and that the lakes and rivulets are again pouring out their dewy offerings to the skies.

March is an unpleasant month for the Rambler. There is but little comfort abroad, either for the feet upon the ground we tread, or for our sensations in the air we breathe. Still I would not relinquish my walks, except in storms or the severest cold. There is an interest in roaming abroad at this time, though it be our

object but to watch the breaking up of the ices, and to mark the progress of the thousand new made rivulets, that leap down the snowy mountains towards the grand reservoir of waters. And there are places always to be found which are inviting to the solitary pedestrian, during the most uncomfortable seasons; on the sunny slope of a chain of hills, or the southern border of a wood, or under the banks of the seaside, where the high bluffs protect one from the winds, and the sandy beach affords a dry and agreeable promenade.

Though the fields at this time afford to the mere virtuoso but few inducements for his researches, yet the treasures of the sea-shore are as abundant as at any other season. The collector of shells would find no great variety of rare specimens on our New England coast; but there are objects everywhere to be found which are interesting and beautiful. It is not, however, for the sole purpose of collecting curiosities to enrich the variety of one's cabinet, that the true lover of nature would visit her walks, in field and forest, or by the sea-shore. Almost all nature's beautiful productions lose their charms in my sight, as soon as they are removed from her domains. I love to view them in connection with those scenes for whose embellishment they were evidently created; and a garden filled with the fairest flowers of all climes soon languishes upon my sight, that views with rapture a solitary violet, blooming under the shelter of mosses, or a primrose on a barren plain, surrounded by sedges and wild indigo. Every object becomes more charming when associated with some agreeable rural sentiment. It is for this reason that a humble and solitary cottage in the wilderness is a more interesting object than all the courtly splendor of a city.

People who have always lived in the interior of the country, can have but little conception of the pleasure of a seaside ramble, which is, during this month, when the sharp west winds prevail more than from any other quarter, particularly pleasant. Among the lakes and rivers, and hills and valleys of an interior landscape, though there may be found an endless variety of pastoral beauty, yet there is nothing that will compare with the sublimity and extent of a water prospect on the banks of the sea. Neither can such a view be fully appreciated by those who have beheld it only from the harbor of a large city, where so many of the works of art cover and conceal its native magnificence, and withdraw the mind from those solemn but cheerful contemplations that would otherwise be awakened by the scene. We must go forth upon the solitary shores, at a distance from the town, and walk upon the high bluffs that project far enough into the sea to afford sight of a complete hemisphere of waters, to obtain a just idea of a sea prospect. When we look from the deck of a sailing ship, where nothing on all sides is to be seen except the ocean, bounded by the circle that seems to divide the dark blue of the waters from the more ethereal azure of the skies, — while contemplating such a scene, our emotions, though sublime and solemn, are not agreeable. But when this blue expanse of waters divides the prospect equally with the landscape, that is spread out in a luxuriant variety of woodland, plain, and mountain, as viewed from an elevated promontory, the emotions excited by the sublimity of the scene, on the one hand, are softened into tranquil pleasure by the beauty and loveliness of the opposite prospect.

There is no month which is so apt an emblem as March, with its constant and unexpected changes of

.

weather, its sunshine and gloom, its winds and calms, of the vicissitudes of human life. On the present day, the gales are wafting upon their wings, as the hopes of youth are borne upon the fancy, all the gay promises of spring; to-morrow the cold blasts of winter are pouring down from the frozen regions of the north, and all the vernal hopes of yesterday are crowned with disappointment. Thus on one day of our lives, every circumstance seems to promise immediate happiness; the next upon its arrival, brings nothing but the dismal evidence of the deceitfulness of those promises. Still in the midst of all these vicissitudes of climate, there is always a satisfactory assurance, that the alternations of cold and heat, gloom and sunshine, will settle down at last into the general calm of summer, which must, in the course of nature, soon arrive. And thus while surrounded by the adversities of life, that come upon us like wintry storms in March, when we are looking for spring, there is always a hope existing in our minds, that a tranquil and summer prosperity will ere long take the place of our present troubles and calamities.

X.

WEATHER SIGNS.

WE are continually surrounded by perils arising from the changes of the weather; and man has always looked anxiously up to heaven, with the hope that some kindly foreboding might be revealed to him from on high, of the changes that may happen. There are cycles in the heavens as there are seasons on the earth, and the former may be calculated with the same precision as the latter. All periodic changes belong to these exact calculations; but such as are not periodical, can never be certainly foreknown, and the aim of the observer of the weather, is to guess at the principles by which they are governed, and to learn as much of their operation as may be calculated by attending to visible phenomena.

Nature gives intimations of all approaching changes; but these forewarnings are so numerous and appertain to so many elements, that it is difficult to ascertain them, and to fit them together so as to convey any certain knowledge to the mind. It is not that nature is variable in her laws, or in the signs she displays to indicate the operation of those laws; but in the infinitude of these combinations, we can seldom read her meaning

with accuracy. She has a written and a spoken language, and the misinterpretation of a single word may reverse the true meaning of her sentences. All the sounds of the elements, could we interpret them, would convey to our minds some palpable ideas of the changes in the weather; for never is there a change in one of the elements, but the others give some intimation of it either to the ear, or to the eye. These mystic words we can never understand, unless we study them in connection with those written signs which are painted on the skies, in the forms of the clouds, in the aspects of the heavenly bodies, in the dews upon the grass, in the frost upon the trees and windows, and the meteoric phenomena displayed by day and by night. If we find that what nature has telegraphed upon the heavens does not seem to correspond with the minuter signs which she exhibits upon the dews, the flowers, and other vegetation, the fault is in our interpretations of her language:

Let us not despair, however, in our attempts to acquire a knowledge of these signs. By constantly noting their details, and observing them under all their different modes of combination, we may arrive at a degree of accuracy which may enable us to predict a storm with as much certainty as we now predict an eclipse. We are to seek for these signs not merely upon the heavens and out of doors; for within doors, by our parlor fireside or our kitchen hearth, many phenomena are revealed to us which are as important as the prophetic clouds upon the sky, or the dews and vapors upon the plain. When a storm is about to gather over our heads, the vapor from the boiling water over our kitchen fires, hastens to join the gathering clouds, and the water is more rapidly evaporated. This is probably a baro-

metrical phenomenon ; and a similarly increased evaporation of waters from every existing source may be one important cause of the rain or snow that follows. Whatever the state of the atmosphere may be that causes this more rapid evaporation, it is evident that if it be universal, it must be followed by an extraordinary accumulation of moisture which, as soon as an opposite barometrical state of the atmosphere ensues, must generate clouds and rain.

While from these humble sources the atmosphere is gathering a tribute of moisture, which must soon be restored to some part of the earth, the aspects of nature do not remain unchanged. These aspects vary with the season of the year, and also with the prevailing habit of the weather during that period, whether wet or dry, cold or hot. When our attention is attracted within doors to the more rapidly evaporating water, the weaker draught in the chimney, the peculiar flickering of the blaze of the lamp, or to any other indoor signals, we should probably, on looking out of doors, find the aspect of the heavens assuming a change. If the sky has been clear, some beautiful collections of cirrus will be seen assembling in the upper heavens, with their minute fibres spread out like electrified down. These fleecy clouds are constantly augmenting, and generally observe a particular direction in their radiations, corresponding not always with the direction of the wind, but probably with some current of electricity in the region where they lie.

When these gossamer clouds have become very generally diffused, and have arranged themselves in many beautiful configurations, they will soon begin to suffer a metamorphosis. The straight diverging fibres that resembled hairs or the feathery portion of a quill, arranged

in order on each side of a darker line that passes between them, will slowly gather themselves into little rounded heaps, resembling the spots on the back of a fish. It is this spotted appearance which has caused it to be named mackerel cloud, by the fishermen. The cirrus is soon entirely resolved into this mottled cloud, as if all its filaments had, by some mechanical process, been twisted into rolls; but it is only by observing the succeeding phenomena that we can decide whether this appearance is to be regarded as the precursor of wet weather. Underneath this dappled cloud there is often a mass of fleecy vapor that appears to be slowly resolving itself into the cloud above it. As this vapor is precipitated from the lower atmosphere, it is attracted by the cloud above it which is constantly thickening as the last is slowly incorporated with it. When we observe this double layer of cloud, we are reassured that the promises of rain held out by the former appearances, are likely to be fulfilled. The upper cloud is rendered more and more dense by reinforcements from this lower formation, until it assumes the character of huge masses rolled together in uniform heaps, which are now distinctly seen moving in the direction of the wind. Rain soon follows, especially if underneath all this moving mass, a *scud* is seen proceeding rapidly in a contrary direction.

If this mackerel cloud (cirro-cumulus) happens to be formed during a period of extensive drought, it is soon absorbed into the upper regions of the atmosphere, and the skies become clear again, without the promised rain. This dissolution commonly takes place just after sunset, commencing at early dew-fall. The clouds are first formed from the condensation of moisture into a visible shape by the cooling influence of contact with an upper,

colder current of air. While the sun continues to shine upon the earth, a sufficient quantity of moisture is supplied by evaporation from the earth's surface to keep up the cloud-forming process. As soon, however, as the sun begins to decline, this supply of moisture is cut off. The surrounding air, on cooling, deposits all superabundant moisture in the shape of dew, and no more vapor ascends to complete the organization of the clouds in the upper air. Hence they are gradually re-absorbed into the atmosphere by a process which, in the daytime, was not sufficiently rapid to keep pace with the reinforcements from beneath.

- After the evaporation from the earth has been diminished by the withdrawal of the sun's heat and rays, if the clouds still continue to thicken, there is evidence that they are receiving supplies from a source independent of immediate evaporation from the earth's surface. The upper currents of the atmosphere are probably saturated with moisture which renders it incapable of absorbing the clouds in contact with it. If, at this conjuncture, a damp wind from the ocean were to set in underneath, the clouds between these two damp strata of air would be constantly gaining density, and would soon become so heavy as to descend in rain. If the clouds, therefore, which are formed during the day, evaporate soon after sunset, we know that they are dependent on immediate supplies of vapor from the earth's surface; but if they continue to increase after sunset, there is proof that the atmosphere above and below them is saturated with moisture, and rain will be likely to follow.

When all these conditions are present, the lower animals are instigated to perform certain unusual actions and to make a temporary suspension of their usual

habits. These habits of birds, insects, and other animals, however, may often avail us as weather signs, before any atmospheric changes have become perceptible to us. But these creatures are not to be regarded as prophets. Man only prophesies by observing the connection between their actions and the weather that follows. The tree-frog that from the old oak utters his signal cries, enables us to prognosticate a shower, of which he knows nothing. He feels the agreeable influence of a damper atmosphere that precedes a shower, and his voice is heard at noonday uttering those sounds which are commonly heard only at dew-fall. The swallow flies low and often dips into the stream, because she finds near the surface of the water a greater abundance of insects which are prevented from rising, by the dampness of the air.

During the prevalence of these phenomena, the heavenly bodies often exhibit peculiar aspects and add new assurances to our predictions. As nature, after a genial shower in summer, raises her bow in the clouds, to be at the same time a proof of the subsidence of the tempest and a signal for a general hymn of gladness to the unseen Deity;—in like manner before a shower, she encircles the moon with a luminous halo, to give kindly warning of the coming event. The constellations are often arrayed in unusual brightness, and then suddenly begin to wane. Hesperus, after leading forth the bright hosts of evening, sinks down behind a pavilion of mist, and the chaste Diana displays her crescent dripping with dews, as if she had just risen out of the aerial damps of the earth. It was not all in vain that the ancients believed the moon to be placed in heaven; not only to illuminate the night, but also to unfold to the inhabitants of earth the presages of the future;

accordingly in the circular halo, in the lunar rainbow and the dripping crescent, man may behold on a still, calm night, the omens of an approaching tempest.

The vegetable world shows intimate relations to all these meteoric phenomena; and never does the hair cloud in the upper heavens reveal the commencement of a change, but the flower of the chickweed by half closing its sensitive cup, responds to the same prediction. When the clouds have gathered thickly around this delicate nucleus, and the blue sky is hidden by a congregated multitude of cumuli, until the heavens are dappled all over with their dark masses — then this little flower folds together its white petals and its green calyx, as if to preserve the delicate stamens that are arranged like so many little nestlings in its minute flower cups, from all impending change. Every little flower droops its head and prepares to meet the storm, and as the air becomes still more heavily loaded with moisture, the clover and the wood-sorrel contract their tri-foliate leaves; and upon the barren hills, the gray lichens, whose brittle branches so generally crumble beneath our tread, have become firm and elastic. Thus do all the phenomena of the earth and the heavens correspond in their significations; and the sea-gulls that leave the vicinity of the ocean and settle down restlessly near some inland harbor, bring us assurance that above their own home on the waters, the elements are preparing for strife.

The clouds have at length accumulated so as to darken all the sky; the cormorant has forsaken the sea; and the plover and the curlew seem restless and agitated in their usual haunts upon the shore. The pimpernel has closed its scarlet flowers, and the purple sandwort that clusters around our door steps in dry places, has

shut up its little red eyelids; and the drooping flowers of the field and the garden droop more heavily; the amaryllis and the day-lily turn their delicate heads from the wind, and the wild geranium has twisted its capsules, and scattered its seeds, as if endued with a presentiment of the approaching rain, and cast them forth at the moment most favorable to their germination. The small birds have discontinued their songs, and fly about restlessly, as if they were undetermined what to do, or perceived some secret cause of alarm. Bees fly only short distances from their hives, and return soon. All insects are more than usually restive, except the spider who mopes in his den and seems half torpid. The toads have come out from their retreats in multitudes, and unlike other animals, hop about in awkward merriment, as if they expected some gift from the skies. Last of all the east wind rolls the billows ashore, and the swinging roar of the waves may be heard responding to the signals that have appeared simultaneously over all the earth and the heavens.

Not only do certain animals utter unusual sounds in that state of the atmosphere, that indicates the approach of rain; but all distant sounds are heard more distinctly than usual, because the atmosphere, when full of moisture, becomes a more perfect conductor. In these phenomena we observe the same correspondences, which I have already noticed; and when the clouds are thickening over our heads and the moon looks down upon her shadows softened by intervening mists, the tolling of distant bells is heard more distinctly, and all distant sounds boom more audibly over the plain. The roar of the waves which is always louder before a storm, on account of the strong winds that roll them more heavily upon the beach, would be more audible at such times

without any increase of motion; for not only is the air a better conductor of sound, but the east wind bears the sound more directly to our ears.

I have as yet treated chiefly of the signs that portend rain, during dry weather. The signs of fair weather during rain are less familiar to us, because our opportunities for observing them are less favorable. We cannot see them in the habits of flowers, but the lower animals are commonly affected in some peculiar manner, when a change is about to take place. While man is, for the most part, governed by his own reason and observation, the lower animals are unconsciously actuated by a wisdom that is above them, and which, through the medium of their sensations, guides them to certain movements often attributed to a prescience that does not belong to them.

On the approach of fair weather, the cattle leave their shelters, and prefer to lie in the open field, and the sheep seek the brow of the hill, because they are governed by their own sense of comfort. The birds which are restless and unmusical before a storm, come out of their retreats after it has passed away, and if the state of the atmosphere is such as indicates a permanent change, they perceive this in connection with the protracted light of day, and prolong their strains to a comparatively late hour in the evening. Hence, the woods are unusually vocal after a summer shower, unless there are other showers preparing to rise. If the birds sing at this critical moment, we shall not fail to observe the flies in great numbers hovering in the beams of the sun, and swarms of gnats whirling round in a sort of hollow column or vortex; as the moist air that precedes a rain, scatters them, the dryer and more bracing air that follows it, assembles them again and prompts them to

renew their gambols. The bats, governed in their movements by these increased multitudes of insects, come out more numerous after a rain, in pursuit of their insect prey.

I have thus far made an attempt to show the harmonious relations that exist between those different natural phenomena which have been regarded as weather signs; but I have made no attempt to enumerate their details, which are too numerous for an essay of this description. The more we study these relations, the more shall we be delighted with a science that is constantly unveiling some new mystery. Every step we take in this field of wonders, reveals new truths to our sight, not perplexing the mind with doubts and inexplicable problems, like the study of metaphysics, but making our understanding clear with every step in our progress, and affording us the pleasing consciousness that we are drawing constantly nearer that divine temple from which emanates all light and knowledge and beauty.

XI.

COLORS AND FRAGRANCE OF FLOWERS.

THE colors, forms, and fragrance of the leaves of plants, and of their flowers and fruit, have always been a subject for curious philosophical speculation, and a great many theories have been advanced to explain their uses and advantages. The Abbe St. Pierre, who has treated the subject very fully, indulges the fancy that nature, in all these things, has operated with regard to general effects; and this idea is the great fundamental error upon which his speculations are founded. He describes nature as working with reference to the production of a beautiful picture, and proceeds upon the hypothesis that she covers the trees and shrubs with beautiful flowers to adorn the fields and please the sight of man. Such ideas may be occasionally introduced into one's writings as pleasing poetical fancies, but they are not true philosophy. In the following speculations I proceed upon the hypothesis, that in every thing which nature does for any species of plant or animal, she does for the particular advantage of the individual or the species. I proceed on the assumption that nature works, in all that has reference to the organization of a plant or an animal, solely for the welfare and preser-

vation of that plant or animal, and their respective species, and not for the advantage of another; as a man builds a house with windows, not for the sake of accommodating the sun, but for the sake of affording the inhabitants the benefit of his light. If we observe that a certain plant bears a flower with beautiful forms and hues, and with sweet odors, we are rational in supposing that these forms, hues, and odors are given it for some purpose needful to itself or its species; and not for the benefit of the insects that may thereby be attracted to it, nor for that of man, whose senses may be regaled by it. They are an indispensable part of nature's arrangements for the preservation of the individual or the perpetuation of the species, and for these purposes alone.

The honey in the nectary of the flower is a part of that apparatus, which, in connection with the corolla and the essences that emanate from the flower, nature has provided for the perpetuation of the species, by securing the coöperation of insects in the work of fertilizing the blossom. But the honey in the nectary of the flower, though placed there to entice the bees and other insects, is not designed for the special good of these insects, but to cause them to perform an act of special benefit to the flower or the plant. The honey being placed there, nature then forms the bee with instruments for obtaining the honey, and with an instinct that guides him to it. But she places no burdens on one species for the mere benefit of another. The different parts of the flower are evidently arranged with reference to the development and perfection of the seeds and fruit; and there is reason to believe that the calyx, the corolla, the hues and fragrance and the forms of the flower are all aids in perfecting the seeds and

fruit, though the purpose they serve be not so apparent as that served by the stamens and pistils. As I have already repeated, the nectaries are supplied with honey, that the insects, attracted by it, while engaged in sipping its sweets, should mix the pollen of the flower upon those parts which require to be fertilized by the dust. Could the work of fertilization be performed without the agency of the insect, the honey would not be placed there to tempt it to the blossom for purposes that must be mischievous to the plant. Nature performs no acts from mere wantonness; every creation has some design, though we may be unable to find it out.

It may be objected against this theory, that although it might apply very well to monœcious and diœcious flowers, it seems altogether unnecessary for flowers that have both stamens and pistils. In the case of the latter, it is averred, that the close proximity of the parts must insure the fertilization of the seed. All this may be granted without in the least derogating from the necessity of the coöperation of insects. It is probable that the same law holds among plants as among animals, and that breeding in and in would in the course of time be fatal to any species. Nature has provided against this emergency by attracting the insect to the flower, who bears the pollen of one perfect flower, to the stigma of another flower of the same species.

As the season advances, the insect tribes become more and more numerous, while the numbers of flowers are diminished. On this account they are more easily discovered, and require the aid of their fragrance in a less degree to attract and guide the insect to their cups. Hence the autumnal and later summer flowers have less fragrance than those of spring and the early summer.

But after the autumn has reduced the numbers of the honey-sipping insects, it might be expected that the flowers should again become sweet-scented as in spring. I have observed this to be true of some few species, as of the inconspicuous spiral flowers of the neottia. In the autumn, when those insects abound that consume the foliage of plants, as the grasshopper tribe, many plants are defended from their attacks by a rank herbaceous smell, that emanates from their leaves, and a similar flavor in their taste, while the gaudy flowers of the same plants, like those of the gerardia and the thorn-apple (stramonium) invite the bee to their blossoms. I believe it is an error to consider the honey of the flowers of poisonous plants to be itself poisonous. Were it so, the ends of nature would be defeated, as the insect attracted by it would be killed while in the cup of the flower, and by his own decay cause the destruction of the blossom. Plants which have a medicated leaf are more common in the later summer, when grasshoppers and locusts are numerous, by which they might be devoured. Nature has insured the preservation of the grasses, which are devoured both by insects and quadrupeds, by providing them with the means of multiplying by their roots, which are secured from attack by growing underground.

But nature is not confined to one expedient for promoting the same end. She sometimes gives a sweet smell to the whole plant, instead of confining it to the flower. She has done this for the mint tribe, the sweet briar, and the myrtles. These odors may also serve the purpose of defending them from the grazing and browsing animals and the herbivorous insects. It will be found by examining the characters of plants, that nature does not entice an insect or any other creature to

the plant, if the habit of such insect or animal be to devour it, except in the instances of fruits. When the plant is of such a nature that it would be destroyed by the loss of its foliage, the new growth is invariably protected by thorns, by a poisonous quality of its sap, or by a strong odor or acrid taste, which respectively guard it from the attacks of insects and herbivorous animals. Hence the apple, the pear, the hawthorn, and the rose, whose foliage and tender branches are agreeable and wholesome to animals, are protected in their wild state by thorns. The peach, the plum, and the cherry, on the contrary, are without thorns, and nature accordingly has protected them from the ravages of insects and animals, by infusing a bitter and poisonous principle into their sap. The willow and its kindred tribes, not so well protected by this bitter taste, and being without a poisonous quality, have more of that sort of vitality which enables them to recover from the effects of severe browsing at any season of the year.

There is another fact which is worthy of remark. When the fields and meadows in summer are full of gaudy flowers, we find some species growing in the shade of woods, and under the cover of thick shrubbery. Such is the sweet *pyrola*. Nature has given to this delicate flower, that hides its drooping blossoms under the foliage of the sweet gale and the paniced *andro-meda*, the delicious odor of cinnamon. This species is white, and bears its flowers in a spike with their disk turned downwards. The more elegant and showy flowers of the *pyrola umbellata*, on the other hand, which are not concealed under the foliage of shrubs, being more conspicuous, are accordingly deprived of the fragrance of their kindred species. The same principle is extended to the shrubs; while the magnificent clusters

of the mountain laurel are almost without scent, the less showy and white flowers of the azalea are very fragrant. Hence, too, the Canadian rhodora, whose brilliant lilac flowers are rendered more conspicuous by appearing before their leaves are out, is less odorous than the alder-leaved clethra, whose blossoms might escape notice, when buried under the mass of foliage that is peculiar to the later summer, when they are out.

To this theory there is an apparent exception in the flowers of the grasses, which are neither beautiful nor odorous. But nature has formed the grasses in such a manner as to render them independent of the services of insects for promoting their fertilization. She has caused them to spring up in dense masses, and elevated the flowers on long and slender stems, which are readily moved to and fro by the winds, and constantly brought into contact with one another. To render this process the more certain, the flowers of grasses are unprovided with a corolla, which would interfere with this amalgamating process, and nature has suspended the powdery anthers outside of the glumes, so that the stamens of one flower are easily brought in contact with the pistils of others. The flower of the grass, which is without honey, has neither the fragrance of other flowers, nor its beautiful corolla, which would serve only to guide the insect to a dry fountain, and to an object that has no need of its agency. Nature has established other agents to perform these services for the grasses; and appointed the zephyrs for this purpose, who dip their pinions into the farina of the flowers, and fertilize them while sweeping over the waving field in their invisible flight.

The hues, the fragrance, and the general beauty of the flower are but parts of an apparatus purposely contrived

for the accomplishment of this end. The honey is placed in the flower for no other purpose but to attract the insect. The fragrance is designed to spread abroad into the atmosphere something that shall notify the insect of the presence of the flower, and the beauty of its form and the splendor of its hues are intended to guide the insect to its exact location. The bee has just emerged from the hive, to go abroad in search for his honeyed subsistence. How would he find it, if the flower had neither brilliancy of hues nor sweetness of scent? And why should these things be superadded to the flower and thereby attract the insect to it, if the insect be in no way serviceable or necessary to the plant? On coming out he perceives the odor of the sweet-scented narcissus; but this odor is so equally diffused that it serves only to detain, not to guide or direct him. While flying round in the midst of the perfumed gales, the beautiful disk of the flower, with its white corolla, and its purple and yellow centre, suddenly attracts his sight, and he directs his course immediately to its depository of sweets.

The flower attracts attention both by its colors and its forms, which are almost always regular and geometrical, that they may form a more conspicuous contrast with the herbage around. A solitary flower, which was not conspicuous, might entirely escape the sight of a multitude of insects, even if it was highly fragrant, and its obscurity might prove fatal to the continuance of its species. Nature has, therefore, taken care, by a great variety of arrangements, to avoid any such accident. I have observed that the wild strawberry blossoms that grow under the shade of bushes, where they are hidden from the sight of insects, are more apt to prove barren

of fruit, than those of the same species that grow in an open field.

It is for this reason that solitary flowers are commonly more beautiful than flowers that grow in clusters, which are rendered conspicuous by their aggregations. For this reason, also, drooping flowers, that are partly concealed by their position, are more fragrant than those of kindred species that are upright. There is, as it were, a contention between the plants of different species to display the greatest attractions to the fertilizing insect. The large flower of the dandelion, placed upon the green verdure of the early spring meadow, needs no other contrast, besides that of its own yellow disk with the green grass, to render it a conspicuous object. The pansy, on the other hand, being a smaller flower, compensates itself by assuming a beautiful union of three colors, yellow, violet, and purple, and turns its disk to the sun, not to receive any direct benefit from his rays, but to be more conspicuous, by the reflected light, to the insect advancing in the direction of the rays. These three colors combined can be recognized at a greater distance than any one of the colors alone.

I have remarked that flowers commonly assume geometrical shapes, as contrasting more vividly with the general irregular forms of vegetation. There are certain plants, like the orchids, that are remarkable for assuming the shapes of insects, that serve to attract the fertilizing agent by holding up an image of its own features. These characters are said to resemble those of insects which are indigenous to the same country. All such flowers are highly perfumed, and richly stored with honey. Other flowers are furnished with contrivances for holding the insect in confinement until he

has finished his work. Such is the *Asclepias*. Certain small insects enter the flower, and descend through a sort of tube into a chamber containing the parts of fructification. They are immediately confined there by little hairs bristling down towards the base of the flower, that prevent their returning. The insect, made restless by this confinement, moves about and covers himself with pollen. The flower soon fades, when he escapes, bearing this pollen to another flower, and producing a cross which could not otherwise be effected.

It may be observed that the most gaudy flowers have in general the least odor; for just in proportion as they are made attractive by their forms and by the splendor of their hues, is their fragrance less needful to them. Accordingly, white flowers are generally sweeter than those of the same genus which are highly colored. The white daffodil and the white lily are the sweetest of their respective genera. The same is true of the white tulip, which is, I believe, always fragrant. Some of the most powerful odors are emitted by greenish flowers, like those of the ambrosia and mignonette, of the grape vine, and of many of the amentaceous trees and shrubs. With respect to flowers of an inconspicuous and greenish hue, it is worthy of notice that they are seldom solitary, but grow in dense clusters or spikes, or upon trees where they are rendered apparent as a part of the tree that bears them. In this way, also, we may account for the fact that the flowers of trees are not, in general, so beautiful as those which grow upon the ground, since the elevated position of the former causes them to be more readily discovered by the insect. The flowers of twining plants, on the other hand, are the largest in existence. Their habit of creeping about under the shade of trees and shrubs, places them in

comparative obscurity. Nature compensates them by giving them a large and attractive flower, or one that is very sweetly scented. The vines of the squash and the pumpkin, whose broad leaves might conceal their flowers, bear them of extraordinary size; and the passion-flower is formed with the most beautiful arrangement of parts and variety of colors to render it conspicuous. The same is true, in a less degree, of the convolvulus and the bignonia. The Mexican vine and some of the honeysuckles, on the contrary, having less conspicuous flowers, receive their compensation by being endowed with an extraordinary amount of fragrance.

There are certain trees that bear solitary flowers widely separated from one another. These are either very gaudy like those of the tulip trees, or very sweet like those of the magnolia. Nature has likewise adapted the colors of flowers to their situations. Thus we find the flowers that grow in the shade of woods are mostly white, while those that stand out in the open field often have dark hues, which would be indistinguishable under the shade of the forest. The flowers of most of the fruit trees are white, mixed with shades of crimson; but as white forms a more conspicuous contrast with green than with the naked branches of the trees, those trees and shrubs that produce their flowers before the leaves are usually pink or crimson. Such are those of the peach and the almond, while the white blossoms of the pear and the cherry do not appear until the foliage is out, and open at the same time with it. The blossoms of the apple-tree, which appear simultaneously with the development of their leaves, are crimson before they are opened, when the leaves are yet unexpanded, but grow white when the flowers are fully

opened on the groundwork of the ripely developed foliage. The Canadian rhodora and the procumbent azalea, which are crimson, bear their flowers before the leaves, while the white azalea appears only after the full maturity of its foliage.

Most of the water-lilies are white: but white, if it were planted upon the pure glassy surface of the water, would not be very discernible, as the water which in one position is blue, in another is white. But the white water-lilies are always expanded on a smooth green carpet formed by their broad flat foliage, so that the white flowers are contrasted with the verdure of this surface of leaves, and not with the white or blue surface of the water. The *saracenia*, on the contrary, that suspends its nodding flowers over the shallow waters of the lake shore, reflecting sometimes the blue of the sky, and sometimes the whiteness of the clouds, is made conspicuous by the sobriety of its colors. Its dark chocolate and purple hues render it discernible at a great distance, rising out of the shallow and reedy waters.

There are other colors of vegetation, besides those of the flowers, for which a reason and a purpose are not so easily assigned. The purpose served by the greenness of the foliage of all or nearly all plants may not be a single one. It seems to me not improbable that nature has selected it as a groundwork upon which the flowers are rendered more conspicuous than they could be rendered by any other color. Of this fact the makers of bouquets are fully aware. A few flowers, placed on a background of green foliage, make a better show than a whole bunch of the brightest flowers without any such opposition. No other color can be selected that could so well answer this purpose.

Nature, for this reason, has adopted it to render the flowers, by opposition, more discernible by the insects, whose agency is required in their fertilization.

The primary object of nature, however, in giving this hue to the foliage of vegetation, is probably the adaptedness of a green color to promote that degree and kind of absorption of light which is necessary for the oxygenating process, carried on by the leaves or the lungs of the plant. Our knowledge of vital chemistry is not yet sufficient to enable us to assign the peculiar action of the green color of the leaf upon the juices of the vegetable. Green is probably that medium tint which is most favorable to the moderate action of the sun's rays, which would be too powerful as generators of heat in a darker colored leaf, or as generators of oxygen in the lighter colored one.

XII.

A P R I L .



THERE are pleasurable emotions awakened by the return of spring, unfelt at any other season of the year, and resembling those we might be supposed to experience upon a renewal of our youth. We certainly feel younger and more hopeful at this season than in the autumn; and we look back upon the lapse of the three winter months, with a less realizing sense of the loss of so much of our allotted period of life, than upon the lapse of the three summer months. The flight of either season carries us equally onward in our mortal progress; yet we cannot avoid the feeling that seems to convince us that the lapse of winter is our gain, as the lapse of summer was our loss. And surely of these two feelings, the one that deceives is better than the one that utters the truth; and though we are several months older than we were in the autumn, we may thank heaven for the delusion that makes us feel younger.

The spring, which is the best season for action and enjoyment, may be regarded as unfavorable to contemplation. So many delightful objects are constantly inviting us to pleasure, that the mind is tempted to neglect its serious pursuits, and we feel too much exhilara-

tion for business or study. It is not while surrounded by pleasures of any kind, that we are most capable of reflecting upon them, or describing their influence; as the act of thinking upon them requires a temporary suspension of our enjoyments. Hence in winter we can most easily describe the charms of spring, when the task becomes a pleasing occupation, by reviving the scenes of recollected nature, and thus affording us a retrospective joy, blended with a foretaste of that which is to come. But when the rising flowers, the perfumed breezes, and the music of the animated tenants of the streams, woods, and orchards, are all inviting one to come forth and partake of the pleasures they proffer, it is difficult to sit down, apart from these delights, to the comparatively dull task of describing them.

Spring is, therefore, the inspiring season of enterprise, rather than of poetry, as instead of telling of joys that are past, it unfolds the promise of future happiness. It is not the season of thought, inasmuch as it is not the occasion of melancholy and retrospection. It is the time for the lover of nature to collect his observations, to improve his taste for the beauties that are spread before him, and to partake of the entertainment that is provided for him; but winter is the season for reflecting upon these observations, and for descanting on pleasures that are past. In autumn, likewise, we cast melancholy and wishful thoughts back upon the beautiful months that have just fled, with feelings more alive to their charms than when they were present with us, rendering every circumstance and every effort of the mind agreeable, that serves to revive them distinctly in our memory. Thus during the absence of friends, we become more sensible of the happiness their presence

afforded us; of the value of their friendship, the charms of their society, and the dreariness of separation.

As childhood is not always happy, the spring is not always cheerful; and as youth is sometimes visited with the sorrows and afflictions of later life, the vernal skies are sometimes blackened with wintry tempests, and the earth bound up with ices and frost. Even in the month of April, the little flowers that are just peeping forth from their winter coverts, are often greeted with snow as well as sunshine. The chilly breezes from the ocean are likewise a constant source of discomfort to the dwellers on the coast. Yet with all these cheerless winds, April is, in general, a delightful month, and the annoyance of the sea-breezes is hardly felt, except by invalids, or those who have been enervated by confinement. An east wind is not without its advantages to the laboring man or the pedestrian. When accompanied with sunshine, this is the only wind that is of such an equable temperature as to admit of brisk exercise in the open air at all times and seasons, without suffering from the extremes of cold or heat.

The ices which have bound the earth for half the year are at length dissolved; the mountain snows are spread out in fertilizing lakes upon the plains, and the whole vegetable world is awakening to a new and beautiful resurrection. The crocus, the snowdrop, and the yellow daffodil are already blooming in the gardens; the early blue violet spangles the southern slopes of the pastures, the vernal saxifrage crowns the mossy surfaces of the rocky hills, and here and there may be found a delicate blossom of the early anemone, in the sunny places in the oaken woods. The barren hills are velvety with mosses of a perfect greenness, delicately shaded with a profusion of glossy brown stems, like so many hairs,

terminating with the peculiar flower of the plant; and long stripes of verdure are interspersed among the gray rocks and seared vegetation, marking the progress of the little rivulets, as they pursue their irregular course down the hill-side into the valleys. The lowlands, so magnificent in autumn, when covered with the flowers of the purple aster and the golden coreopsis, are now mostly covered with a sheet of glistening waters, put into constant agitation by the multitudes of frogs that are tumbling about in the shallows, as they are engaged in their croaking frolics.

If you wander, after the middle of the month, along the alluvial borders of the streams, you may discover the newly risen flowers of the fetid hellebore, (*Ictodes fœtidus*;) the greatest vegetable curiosity of the season, resembling some monster with a spotted helmet, just peeping his head above the surface of the earth. It is a medicinal herb; has a dragonlike aspect when it first appears, and conceals its flowers, which are curious and not inelegant, beneath a blood-stained hood, strongly marked with green and purple. In similar situations you may find the elegantly mottled leaves of the dog-tooth violet, the American erythronium; and, if the season be forward, its beautiful lilylike flowers, nodding as if it were dangerous to exhibit a full view of their charms, and hiding their heads beneath the broad leaves which, at a distance, are the only conspicuous parts of the plant.

The odors that perfume the atmosphere in early spring are chiefly exhaled from the flowering trees and shrubs; in summer they proceed from the herbage and flowers that cover the surface of the earth. Many trees and shrubs are already in blossom; but a whole month will elapse before the green fields will be brightly

gemmed with flowers. The red maple is clothed in a full drapery of crimson, exhibiting in April as in October, the most gorgeous spectacle in the forest. Several species of willows are elegantly festooned with tassels that hang like fringe from every twig; the aments of some species being of a silvery whiteness; and covered with silken down, and others of a bright golden hue. The Balm of Gilead and other poplars, while the scales are dropping from their hybernacles, to loose the young flowers from their confinement, afford the most grateful of all odors, combining the sweetness of the rose with the terebinthine odors of the pine, and causing the vernal gales of our landscape to rival the spicy breezes of Arabia. But there are exhalations that spring from the soil itself, at this time of the year, that afford an agreeable sensation of freshness, almost like fragrance, and resembling the scent of the cool, refreshing sea-breezes, which, wafted over beds of rockweed and other sea plants, when the tide is low, often rise up suddenly in the heat of summer.

Though the tassel-bearing trees and shrubs, from the graceful willow down to the humble tribes of hazels and Dutch myrtles, are the principal flowering plants of the present month, yet as the season advances, several species of small flowers, anticipating the arrival of May, will often add their beauty to the floral garland of April. The coltsfoot already spangles the fallow tillage lands and neglected gardens, with its yellow compound flowers, just before the coming of the dandelion, of which it is a miniature likeness; the gill, with its whorls of minute, lip-shaped blossoms, of a bright blue, may soon be seen, under the shade of the fences and shrubbery, and many other plants, not yet in flower, exhibit their rising tufts of green leaves, about the fields and

by-ways. In the woods, the white starlike flowers of the goldthread are glittering among the evergreen leaves that have just escaped from their long burial in the snows; and in the fertile meadows, the bloodroot, worthy of a better name, sends up its delicate clusters of white flowers, under the protection of the leafless trees and shrubbery.

The student of nature, during the present month, must carefully observe the weather-signs, before he ventures far from the shelter of a roof, especially when the south wind is blowing. The most tempting weather, on account of impending showers, is the most dangerous. When the gales are breathing gently from the south, laden with the spicy odors of the more forward vegetation of southern groves and orchards, we are tempted, by the balmy sweetness and grateful warmth of the atmosphere, to take no note of distance in our excursions. We forget every thing in the world but the sensations derived from the odors, the soft breezes, and the wood-notes, all mingled together in a sort of delirious confusion; and we become too deeply intoxicated with pleasure, to think upon the lapse of minutes and hours, or of the dull business that may call us homeward. In the mean time, the clouds imperceptibly thicken overhead, and while one is still a mile from any shelter, save that of the pine wood, that can avail one only during a momentary shower, the rain begins to pour down with violence, and awakens him from his pleasing reverie, to a realizing sense of discomfort and solitude. I have frequently been thus overtaken in my rambling excursions, and when completely drenched with rain, after a delightful tour, I have thought I could realize the misery, which the man of pleasure must experience, when suddenly reduced from a condition of

wealth and luxury, to one of shame, poverty, and wretchedness.

The landscape, though not yet clothed with leaves and verdure, is already awake with the revival of the animated creation. The little familiar bluebirds are busy among the hollows of old trees, where they rear their offspring, secure from the depredation of foes. Multitudes of them, seen usually in pairs and seldom in flocks, are scattered over the orchards, responding to each other, in their few plaintive, but cheerful notes; and their azure plumage is beautifully conspicuous, as they flit among the naked branches of the trees. The voice of the robin resounds in all familiar places, and the song of the linnet is heard in the groves which have lately echoed but with the scream of the jay and the cawing of the raven. Young lambs, but lately ushered into life, may be seen, with various antic motions, trying the use of those limbs, that seem to run wild with them, before they have hardly ascertained their powers; and parties of little children, some with baskets, employed in gathering salads, others busied in picking the red fruit of the partridge berry, will often pause from their labors with delight, to watch the friskings of these happy creatures.

The little insects that whirl about on the surface of the still waters, have commenced their gambols anew, and fishes are again seen darting about in the streams. A few butterflies, companions of the early spring flowers, are flitting in irregular courses over the plains, the spider is seen hanging by its invisible thread, from the twigs of the orchard trees, and insects of various species are swarming in sunny places. The leaves of the last autumn, disinterred from underneath the snow, are once

more rustling to the winds and to the leaping motions of the squirrel. Small tortoises may be seen basking in the sunshine, upon the logs that extend into the ditches, and as we draw near, we see their glistening armor, as with awkward haste they plunge into the water. The ices which had accumulated on the flats of the sea-shore, have entirely disappeared; and the little fishes, that congregate about the edges of the salt-water creeks, already make a tremulous motion of the waters, as upon our sudden approach, they dart away from the shallows into the deeper sea.

The sun has sunk below the belt of the horizon. The wind is still, and the countless lakes that cover the meadows which will soon be waving with grass, reflect from their mirrored surfaces a perfect image of every bird and cloud that floats above them. The bright-eyed evening star now shines alone. The lowing of cattle is heard only at intervals from the farm yards; and the occasional sound of distant bells is borne softly in the hush of day's decline. The birds are silent in the woods, save now and then a solitary one, that greeted perhaps by a lingering sunbeam, reflected from a radiant cloud, will sing a few twittering notes of welcome. But nature is not silent. The notes of a countless myriad of little piping musicians, rise in a delightfully swelling chorus, from every lake and stream, now loudening with an increased multitude of voices, then gradually dying away into a momentary silence. These sounds are the charm of an April evening, and in my early days I used to listen to them with more pleasure than to the sweetest strains of music, as prophetic of the reviving beauties of nature. And now, when the first few piping notes fall upon my ear, my

mind is greeted by a vision of dearly remembered joys, that crowd vividly upon the memory. These tender recollections, blended with the hopes and anticipations of spring, serve with all other attributes of the season, to tranquillize the mind and render it cheerful and satisfied with the world.

XIII.

THE VERNAL FLOWERS.



IN our climate we seldom realize, during the months of April and May, that pleasant temperature which is supposed to characterize the vernal season of the year. The earth is often covered with snow until the first of April, and the weather is too cold for vegetation before the middle of the month. The progress of the year is retarded by the prevalence of north-easterly winds, and the icebergs that float down from the Arctic seas infuse a chill into our atmosphere, long after the sun has brought out the early flowers, and arrayed the whole wilderness in blossoms. The vernal flowers of our climate do not begin to appear before the middle of April; except in extraordinary seasons, and many of them, retarded by the protracted chills from the ocean, continue to deck the fields until they are suddenly brought to maturity by the hot summer sun. It is not unusual for the whole month of April to pass away without producing more than two or three species of wild flowers; and, on May-day, the youths and maidens are often obliged to abandon their search for flowers, and to crown their young queen with a simple wreath of evergreens.

Among the vernal flowers are usually classed all those, which, in propitious seasons, are expanded during the months of April and May, and mostly become extinct before the days have obtained their greatest length. Within this period the most delicate and interesting flowers of the whole year come to perfection, commencing with the anemones and violets, that bring along in their rear whole myriads of bellworts, cornels, ginsengs, saxifrages, and columbines, until the procession is closed by the wild geranium, that leads on the still more brilliant host of summer. The vernal flowers are mostly herbaceous and minute. They grow in sheltered situations, on the southern slopes of declivities or the sunny borders of a wood, and require but a short period of heat and sunshine to perfect their blossoms. They are generally pale in their tints, many of them white, but commonly tinged with delicate shades of blue or lilac. The anemones of our fields are true vernal flowers, and there is hardly a solitary one to be seen after the middle of June. Such, also, are the most of the violets, the bellworts, and the Solomon's seals. There are some spring flowers, however, that remain in bloom during a great part of summer, until they lose all their charms by constantly intruding themselves upon our notice. Such are the common buttercups, which are favorites with children when they first appear, but shine like gilded toys, and symbolize no charming sentiment to endear them to our sight.

The anemones, on the other hand, present in their habits and appearance emblems of many tender and poetic images. One of the earliest of these to be found in our woods is the liverwort, (*hepatica triloba*), appearing on the sunny slope of a hill that is protected by woods, and continuing to put forth its delicate

blossoms during a period of six weeks. These are the flowers which have generally rewarded my earliest botanical rambles, and every year I behold them with increased delight. They are often seen in crowded clusters, half concealed by some dry oak leaves, that were elevated by the flowers as they sprang up from the bosom of the earth. They vary in color, from a dark purple and lilac, to lighter shades of the same tints. Appearing in clusters that often contain more than twenty flowers, they form a pleasing contrast with the little wood anemone that spangles the mossy knolls with its solitary drooping blossoms, scattered somewhat evenly over the green surface. While we admire the splendor and elegance of the liverwort in clusters of various shades, some purple or lilac, some of a pale blue, and others white, the wood anemones are still more charming, on account of their expression of meekness and delicacy. The rue-leaved anemone differs from each of these. More lively in its appearance than either, it bears several upright flowers upon one stalk, with such a look of cheerfulness that they seem almost to smile upon us from their green shady nooks.

Not the least charming of our vernal flowers is one, which having no standard English name, is known by a different appellation in almost every place. This flower is the *Houstonia cœrulea*. It sometimes appears in the latter part of April; but, in this vicinity, its blossoms are closely identified with the month of May, when they are so thickly strown over the fields, as, at a distance, to resemble a flight of snow spread lightly over the green pastures. The whole plant is almost as delicate as the finer mosses; and the flowers, though minute, are rendered conspicuous by the brilliant golden hue of their centre, that melts imperceptibly into the

azure whiteness of the corolla. The *houstonia* has sometimes been called *starwort*, a name that corresponds very justly with its general habits and appearance. In April one or two solitary flowers of this species may be seen peeping out from the green herbage, as in early evening a few stars are seen twinkling through the diminishing light. These continue to multiply, until they glitter in the meads and valleys like the heavenly host at midnight; and then by degrees they slowly disappear, until June scatters them from the face of the earth, as morning melts away the starry lights in the firmament.

It may seem remarkable that the earliest spring flowers that come up under a frosty sky, and are often enveloped in snow, should, notwithstanding this apparently hardening exposure, exceed almost all others in delicacy. Such are the anemones, the *houstonia*, and the bellwort, among our indigenous plants, and such the crocus, the snowdrop, and the lily of the valley, among the exotics. The spring flowers are likewise, for the most part, more powerfully and more sweetly scented than those of other seasons. Even the aments that hang from the willow, the poplar, and the sweet-fern, are more fragrant than the aments of the oak, the beech, and the chestnut, which appear a month later. The sweet-scented vernal grass, (*anthoxanthum odoratum*,) one of our earliest grasses, is exceeded by no species in fragrance. Many of the small flowers of spring that seem, when examined singly, to be nearly scentless, are found to be very fragrant when collected into bunches. I have observed this fact of some of the violets, of the two-leaved Solomon's seal, and some other small flowers. Though we cannot regard their superior fragrance as an unexceptionable trait in the

character of the spring flowers, yet, as the season advances, the blossoms of plants become less and less fragrant, until the fields of autumn display their myriads of gaudy flowers, that give out scarcely a perceptible odor.

In this phenomenon I think I can detect one of those mysterious provisions of nature, which are instituted for the preservation of the species. All flowers seem to depend more or less upon insects as agents in the work of their fertilization. In early spring, when there are but few insects abroad, they might not be able to discover the flowers, if the latter did not send out into the atmosphere a strong and agreeable perfume, by which the insect is guided to their honey cups. The insect having entered the cup of the flower, while engaged in sipping sweets from the nectaries, mixes the pollen upon the stigma, by the motions of his delicate feet and wings; or, as in the case of the diœcious plants, bears it upon his downy wings and thighs, to the distant blossom that requires its fertilizing properties.

Children, who are unaffected lovers of flowers, have always shown a preference for those of early spring, when they are more attractive on account of their novelty, and seem more beautiful as the harbingers of a warmer season. It is at this time that we most fully realize the influence of the alternations of the seasons, in promoting our happiness. The philosophers of nature long since discovered that winter is necessary as a period of repose for certain vegetable tribes, that without it would perish or become unproductive. But this beneficent change is equally necessary to promote the vigor of all our susceptibilities for enjoyment; and winter, while it shuts us out from very many healthful pleasures, is a period during which our moral feelings

and imagination acquire new sensibilities. It is apparent that to this influence may be attributed the greater pleasure we derive from the sight of the early spring flowers. After the earth has remained bleak and desolate for half the year, every beautiful thing in nature has a renewed charm, when it reappears; and a single violet by the way-side inspires a little child with more delight than he feels when surrounded by a whole garden of blossoms in the month of July.

Parties of young children are annually called out by the first warm sunshine to hunt for the early flowers of April. The botanist is also already out among the birds and children, peeping into green dells under the shelving rocks, or in sunny nooks brushing away the dry oak leaves, to find the early anemone or the fragrant ground-laurel, (*epigæa repens*), dipping his hand into clear streams for *confervæ* and watercresses, or examining the drooping branches of the andromeda for its rows of pearly gems. He thinks not meanly of his pursuit, though he finds for his companions the village children and the poor herb woman who is employed in gathering salads for the market. From her lips he may obtain some important knowledge and derive a moral hint, which may teach him that the sum of our enjoyments is proportioned to the simplicity of our habits and pursuits; and that this poor herb woman, who lives under the open windows of heaven, enjoys more happiness, with all her poverty, than many envied persons who are prisoned in a palace and shackled with gold.

In the early part of the month he finds but few flowers to reward his search, and he watches every little group of children he meets to inquire if they have been successful. By consulting with them he often learns the locality of a rare plant, a new phase in the aspect

of nature, or discovers some forgotten charm that used to hover about certain old familiar scenes, or that was connected with some once familiar object, to whose pleasing influence he had become blunted, but which is now revived in all its former intensity, by witnessing its effects on the susceptible minds of the young. Not long after the first of the month many amentaceous shrubs are covered with their flowing drapery of blossoms. Along the borders of the old stonewalls, and outside of the woods, the hazel groves display some of the earliest flowers of the year. Their light green aments, before the leaves have started from their hybernacles, hang like fringe from their numerous branches; and attracted by their odors the honey bees and other early insects have already commenced their mellifluous operations among their flowery racemes. While the hazel thus adorns the edges of the woods and the rustic way-sides, the hills are covered with sweet fern bushes, whose flowers diffuse a spicy odor that never dies out from their foliage.

We are not obliged to go far from our door steps to see the evidences of reviving vegetation. The elms are fully embroidered with blossoms of a bright chocolate hue; and on account of the graceful droop of their branches, the flowers seem to have a pendulous character, resembling long tassels of fringe, whose sobriety of hue corresponds with the general sombre tints of the landscape. The red maple, arrayed in a more brilliant vesture, and in the ruddy hues of a summer evening cloud, when rising up among the still leafless trees of the forest, seems to illuminate its shady recesses, like a pyre of crimson flame. The willows bearing blossoms either yellow or of a silvery whiteness, occasioned by the down that covers their aments, add a different kind

of lustre to similar grounds. When the elm, the red maple, the different willows, and the tremulous poplar, with its purplish aments, happen to be grouped together in front of an evergreen wood, the April sun looks down upon a scene of varied beauty not surpassed by the floral spectacles that glisten under the brighter beams of the summer solstice.

We have to lament in this climate the absence of many beautiful flowers, which are associated in our minds with the opening of spring, by our familiarity with English literature. We search in vain over our green meads and sunny hill-sides for the daisy and the cowslip, which, like so many gems from heaven, spangle the fields in Great Britain, and gladden the sight of the English cottager. We have read of them until they seem like the true tenants of our own fields; and when on a pleasant ramble we do not find them, there seems to be a void in the landscape, and the fields seem to have lost their fairest ornaments. Thus poetry, while it inspires the mind with sentiments that contribute largely to the sum of our happiness, often binds our affections to objects we can never behold and shall never caress. The daisy and the cowslip are remembered in our reading as the bright-eyed children of spring; and they emblemize those little members of our former family circle, of whom we have heard but have never seen, who exist only in the pensive history of the youthful group whose numbers are imperfect without them.

In our gardens alone do we find the pensive snow-drop, the poetic narcissus, the crocus, and the hyacinth. There only is the heartsease, or tricolored violet, which equally adorns the fresh chaplets of April, and blends its colors with the brown sheaves of October. There

only is the lily of the valley, the bright Bethlehem star, and the creeping blue-eyed periwinkle. The heath is neither in our fields nor our gardens. The flowers of classic lands, and many plants which are sacred to the muse, are not found in the fields and valleys of the new continent. Our native flowers, for the most part, are consecrated only by associations with our own experience, and not with poetry and romance. The starwort, the anemone, the saxifrage, and the drooping bellwort, look up to us from their green mossy knolls, full of the light of the happy years of our childhood; but the flowers which have been sung by the British or the Roman muse, belong to other climes, and our own fields do not know them.

While engaged in the pursuit of flowers, or in general observations of nature, our attention is attracted to the notes and movements of the birds, and we cannot fail to remark that there is a lively garrulity among the feathered tribes at this time, that ceases in the course of a few weeks. Along with the birds of our own fields and woods, arrive multitudes of little strangers, that tarry with us in their journey to a higher latitude, where they go to build their nests and rear their young. They are commonly assembled in loose flocks, chirping and singing almost incessantly; and in the sheltered woodland valleys, whither they resort for protection from the cold winds, the whole air resounds with their garrulous melody. Among these are multitudes of a species of snow-bird, (*fringilla hudsonia*), a little slate-colored sparrow, often seen in winter in company with other snow-birds. The song of this species consists of but few notes, which are very melodious, and when poured forth by a whole multitude in chorus, are exceedingly delightful. Associated with these, are num-

bers of a species of brown finch or bunting, (*fringilla canadensis*,) that join their still more melodious notes to the general medley ; and perhaps at no season of the year are we greeted with a louder chorus than during the latter part of April, when these cheerful birds are migrating to their northern haunts.

In the latter part of the month the signs of promise that were hung out upon the heavens and displayed upon the landscape, begin to be fulfilled. Flowers are more frequent in our paths through the fields, and the light green plaited leaves are conspicuous in the shrubbery. The song-sparrow is weaving her nest in some grassy knoll at the edge of the wood, the robin has commenced his early morning song, and the bluebird is exploring the hollows of old trees for his summer habitation. Every warm shower adds new verdure to the plain, and every morning sun opens new tribes of flowers and revives new hosts of sportive insects. The ploughman is already in the field. He has scattered his early seeds upon the ground ; and man and all other creatures are rejoicing in the happy anticipation of that season which annually restores for a brief period the buoyancy and hopefulness of our early years.

XIV.

PLEA FOR THE BIRDS.



IN the beginning, according to the testimony of the "Wisdom of Solomon," all things were ordered in measure, number, and weight. The universe was balanced according to a law of harmony, no less wise than beautiful. There was no deficiency in one part, or superfluity in another. As time was divided into seasons and days and years, the material world was arranged in such a manner that there should be a mutual dependence of one kingdom upon another. Nothing was created without a purpose, and all living things were supplied with such instincts and appetites as would lead them to assist in the great work of progression. The kingdoms of nature must ever remain thus perfectly adjusted, except for the interference of man. He alone, of all living creatures, has power to turn the operations of nature out of their proper course. He alone has the power to transform her hills into fortifications, and to degrade her rivers to commercial servitude. Yet while he is thus employed in revolutionizing the surface of the earth, he might still work in harmony with nature's designs, and end in making it more beautiful and more bountiful than in its pristine condition.

In the wilderness we find a certain adjustment of the various tribes of plants, birds, insects, and quadrupeds, differing widely from that which prevails over a large extent of cultivated territory. In the latter new tribes of plants are introduced by art, and nature, working in harmony with man, introduces corresponding tribes of insects, birds, and quadrupeds. Man may with impunity revolutionize the vegetable productions, if he but allows a certain freedom to nature, in her efforts to supply the balance which he has disturbed. While man is employed in restocking the earth with trees and vegetables, nature endeavors to preserve her harmony by a new supply of birds and insects. A superabundance of either might be fatal to certain tribes of plants. I believe the insect races to be as needful in the order of creation as any other part of nature's works. The same may be said of that innumerable host of plants denominated weeds. But while man is endeavoring to keep down superfluities, he may, by working blindly, cause the very evil he designs to prevent. It is not easy to check the multiplication of weeds and insects. These, in spite of all direct efforts to check them, will increase beyond their just mean. This calamity would not happen, if we took pains to preserve the feathered tribes, which are the natural checks to the multiplication of insects and weeds. Birds are easily destroyed; some species, indeed, are already nearly exterminated; and all are kept down to such a limit as to bear no just proportion to the quantity of insects that supply them with food.

Although birds are great favorites with man, there are no animals, if we except the vermin that infest our dwellings, that suffer such unremitted persecution. They are everywhere destroyed, either for food or for

the pleasure of the chase. As soon as a boy is able to shoulder a gun, he goes out day after day, and year after year, in his warfare of extermination against the feathered race. He spares the birds at no season and in no situation. While thus employed, he is encouraged by older persons, as if he were ridding the earth of a pest. Thus do men promote the destruction of one of the blessed gifts of nature.

If there be proof that any race of animals was created for the particular benefit of mankind, this may certainly be said of birds. Men in general are not apt to consider how greatly the sum of human happiness is increased by certain circumstances of which we take but little note. There are not many who are in the habit of going out of their way, or pausing often from their labors, to hear the song of a bird, or to examine the beauty of a flower. Yet the most indifferent would soon experience a painful emotion of solitude, were the feathered race to be suddenly annihilated, or were vegetation to be deprived of every thing but its leaves and fruit. Though we may be accustomed to regard these things as insignificant trifles, we are all pleasingly affected by them. Let him who thinks he despises a bird or a flower, be suddenly cast ashore upon some desert island, and after a lonely residence there for a season, let one of our familiar birds greet him with a few of its old accustomed notes, or a little flower peep out upon him, with the same look which has often greeted him by the way-side in his own country, and how gladly would he confess their influence upon his mind!

But there is a great deal of affectation of indifference towards these objects, which is not real. Children are delighted with birds and flowers;—women, who have

in general more cultivation than men, are no less delighted with them. It is a common weakness of men who are ambitious to seem above every thing that pleases women and children, to affect to despise the singing of a bird or the beauty of a flower. But even those who affect this indifference are not wholly deaf or blind. They are merely ignorant of the influence upon their own minds of some of the chief sources of our pleasures.

It is not entirely on account of their song, their beauty, and their interesting habits, that we would set so high a value upon the feathered tribes. They are important in the general economy of nature, without which the operation of her laws would be disturbed, and the parts in the general harmony would be incomplete. As the annihilation of a planet would produce disturbance in the motions of the spheres, and throw the celestial worlds out of their balance, so would the destruction of any species of birds create confusion among terrestrial things. Birds are the chief and almost the only instruments employed by nature for checking the multiplication of insects which otherwise would spread devastation over the whole earth. They are always busy in their great work, emigrating from place to place, as the changes of the seasons cut off their supplies in one country, and raise them up in another. Some, like the swallow tribe, seize them on the wing, sailing along the air with the velocity of the winds, and preserving it from any excess of the minute species of atmospheric insects. Others like the creepers and woodpeckers penetrate into the wood and bark of trees, and dislodge the larvæ before they emerge into the open air. Besides these birds that do their work by day, there are others, like the whippoorwill tribe, that keep their watch

by night, and check the multiplication of moths, beetles, and other nocturnal insects.

Man alone, as I have before remarked, can seriously disturb the operations of nature. It is he who turns the rivers from their courses, and makes the little gurgling streams tributary to the sluggish canal. He destroys the forests, and exterminates the birds, after depriving them of their homes. But the insects, whose extreme minuteness renders them unassailable by his weapons, he cannot destroy, and nature allows them to multiply, and to become a scourge to him, as if in just retribution for his cruelty to the feathered races who are his benefactors.

In the native wilderness, where man has not interfered with the harmonious operations of nature, the insects are kept down to a point, at which their numbers are not sufficient to commit any perceptible ravages. The birds, their natural destroyers, are allowed to live, and their numbers keep pace with the insects they devour. In cultivated tracts, on the contrary, a different state of things exists. Man has destroyed the forests, and raised up gardens and orchards in their place. The wild pasture has become arable meadow, and the whortleberry grounds have been changed into corn fields. New races of beetles and other insects, which are attached to the cultivated vegetables, increase and multiply in the same proportion. If man would permit, the birds that feed upon these insects would keep pace with their increase, and prevent the damage they cause to vegetation. But too avaricious to allow the birds to live, lest they should plunder fruit enough to pay them the wages for their useful labors, he destroys the exterminator of vermin, and thus to save a little of his fruit from the birds, he sacrifices his orchards to the insects.

If any species of birds were exterminated, those tribes of insects, which are their natural food, would become exceedingly abundant. Inasmuch as the atmosphere, if the swallows were to become extinct, would be rendered unfit for respiration, by an increased multitude of gnats and smaller insects,—so were the sparrow tribes to become extinct, vegetation would immediately suffer from an increase of caterpillars, curculios, and other pests of our orchards. We may say the same of other insects with relation to other birds. It is therefore plainly for the interest of the farmer and the horticulturist to use all means for the preservation of birds of every species. There is no danger likely to arise from their excessive multiplication. The number of each species cannot exceed that limit, beyond which they could not be supplied with their proper and natural food. Up to this limit if they could always be preserved, our crops would be effectually secured from the ravages of insects. The country would probably support double the present number of every species of birds, which are kept down below their proper limits, by accident, by the gun of the sportsman, and by the mischievous cruelty of boys.

Most of the smaller kinds of birds have a disposition to congregate around our villages. You seldom find a robin or a sparrow, during breeding time, in the deep forest. It is the same with the insects that serve them for food. There are tribes of insects that chiefly frequent the wild woods; these are the prey of woodpeckers and their kindred species. There are others which are abundant chiefly in our orchards and gardens; these are the prey of bluebirds, sparrows, wrens, and other common and familiar birds.

Man has the power to diminish the multitudes of

insects that desolate the forests and destroy his harvests; but this can be effected only by preserving the birds. Nature has endowed them with an instinct that leads them to congregate about his habitations, as if she designed them to protect him from the scourge of noxious vermin, and to charm his ears by the melody of their songs. Hence every tract which is inhabited by man is furnished with its native singing bird, and man is endowed with a sensibility which renders the harmony of sounds necessary to his happiness. The warbling of birds is intimately associated with every thing that is beautiful in nature. It is allied with the dawn of morning, the sultry quiet of noon, and the pleasant hush of evening. There is not a cottage in the wilderness, whose inmates do not look upon the birds, as the chief instruments of nature to inspire them with contentment in their solitude. Without their merry voices, the silence of the groves, unbroken save by the moaning of the winds, would be oppressive; the fields would lose half their cheerfulness, and the forest would seem the very abode of melancholy. Then let our arms, designed only for self-defence, no longer spread destruction over the plains; let the sound of musketry no longer blend its discord with the voices of the birds, that they may gather about our habitations with confidence, and find in man, for whose pleasure they sing and for whose benefit they toil, a friend and a protector.

XV.

THE SINGING BIRDS AND THEIR SONGS.

THE singing birds are universally regarded as the most interesting part of animated creation; and they are the only creatures, excepting a few of the insect tribe, that can be said to sing. Their voices are associated in our minds with all the beautiful scenes of nature and with the fairest seasons of the year. There is no man, however insensible he may be to the sound of musical instruments, who is not delighted with the warbling of birds, who speak the language of nature and of love. The birds of temperate climates are believed to be better singers than those species that inhabit the tropics. This opinion, generally correct, has probably arisen partly from the fact that a large proportion of the birds that winter in the tropics, belong to the temperate latitudes, and that they are silent during this period, because it is not their breeding season. They sing only in summer, when they return to their native climes to rear their young. The tropics are always full of these sojourners, because there is winter at all times, either north or south of them.

Singing birds are found in the greatest numbers on cultivated, or half cultivated lands, or in woods in the

vicinity of them. It may, therefore, be inferred, that as the country grows older, and is more extensively cultivated, the numbers of our warblers will increase; and it is not improbable that their vocal powers may be improved. Hence it may be true, that for many years, after the first settlement of this country, there were but few singing birds of those species which at the present time are so numerous, having multiplied with the increase of human population and the culture of the wilderness. At that early period, though the same species existed here, and were musical, their numbers might have been so small that one could be seldom heard. By this circumstance travellers were led to believe that there were but few singing birds in America.

A little observation would soon convince one that the wilderness affords comparatively but few warblers. There you find crows, woodpeckers, jays, and other noisy birds, in great numbers; and you occasionally hear the notes of the solitary thrushes and flycatchers; but not until you are in the vicinity of orchards and plantations, are your ears saluted with a full band of feathered musicians. The common bobolinks are seldom found in the deep forests, and are unfrequent in the wild pastures and meadows. Their chief places of resort are the cultivated grass lands. They build their nests on the ground in the midst of the tall grass, and these nests are exposed, in great numbers, by the scythe of the haymaker. These birds, before America was settled by the Europeans, and when the greater part of the country was a wilderness of woods, must have been comparatively few. There are probably thousands at the present day to as many hundreds that existed in the time of Columbus. The common robins, the song-sparrows, the grass-finches, and indeed all our familiar birds,

have probably increased in the same ratio, with the progress of agriculture and the settlement of the country.

The song of birds is undoubtedly innate ; or rather, birds of the same species have, by their organization, a predisposition to utter certain sounds, when under the influence of certain emotions. Besides their native notes, they will learn those of other birds, when confined with them, which they sometimes blend with their native strains. The bobolink, when caged, readily learns the song of the canary, and surpasses the original ; but in his wild state he never deviates from his own peculiar medley. There is reason to believe that nature has provided each species of bird with notes, unlike those of other species, as a means by which individuals should be enabled to identify their own kindred. When confined in a cage all birds may become imitative, and in a measure forgetful of their original strains.

The song of the bird seems to be the means used by the male, not only to woo the female, but to call her to himself when absent. Before he has chosen his mate, he sings more loudly than at any subsequent period. The different males of the same species seem, at that time, to be vying with one another ; and probably the one that has the loudest and most varied song is most likely to be soon attended by a mate. While the two birds are employed in building their nest, the male constantly attends his partner from place to place, and sings less loudly and less frequently than before. This comparative silence continues until the female begins to sit on her eggs. While she is sitting, the male again sings more loudly and incessantly, perched upon some neighboring bough, as if to apprise her of his presence, or perhaps with some inclination to entice her away

from the nest. It is a curious fact that male birds seem to be somewhat displeased with the female while she is sitting, and are more than usually vociferous.

After the young brood is hatched, the attention of the male bird is occupied with the care of his offspring, though he is far less assiduous in his parental duties than the female; and, for a season he becomes somewhat silent, until a second incubation commences. But those species that rear only one brood in a season, become entirely silent after the young birds are fledged and have left the nest. Should they rear another brood, the male becomes once more as vocal as ever while his mate is sitting the second time. He does the same, if he happens to lose his mate, when he becomes again very tuneful and vociferous, uttering his call-notes loudly for several days, and finally changing them into song. Hence it would seem that the song of the bird proceeds from a certain degree of discontent, arising first, from his want of a mate, and secondly, from his uneasiness on account of her absence while sitting upon her eggs. The buoyancy of spirits produced by the delightfulness of the season, and the full supply of his physical wants, is joined with the pains of absence which he is striving to allay. I have often thought that the almost uninterrupted song of caged birds proves their singing to be no certain evidence of happiness, and that it chiefly arises from a desire to entice a companion into their own little prison. It is well known that when an old bird from our own fields is caught and caged, he will continue his tunefulness long after all others of the same species, who enjoy their freedom, have become silent. The bobolink, in a state of freedom, seldom sings after the middle of July; but if one

be caught and caged, he will continue to warble more loudly than he did in his native fields, until September.

The notes of birds in general, seem to be arranged without regard to the intervals of the musical gamut. You seldom perceive any thing like artificial pauses or gradations in their time or melody. This proceeds from no deficiency of musical ear, as every singing bird, while young, may be taught to warble an artificial tune. They never dwell steadily on one note, but are constantly sliding and quavering, full of slurs and *appoggiaturas*. There are some species whose notes approximate to the artificial modulation; but it is worthy of notice that these are not classed among singing birds. The whistling quail utters three notes in his call — the two first alike, except in time, and the third a slide from these to a perfect fifth. The notes of the whip-poorwill resemble those of the quail, his first note being a minor-third above the second, and the third note a fourth above the first, the third note being more perfectly intonated than that of the quail. The common chickadee, or blackcap titmouse, frequently in summer utters two notes which make a perfect minor-third on the descending scale. It is not improbable that if the notes of the singing birds could be accurately written down on the gamut, they might be found to possess a regularity of modulation, corresponding to that which we call the artificial one.

The lark and the nightingale, which have been made so familiar to us by our acquaintance with English literature, are not inhabitants of America, and their absence is lamented by every lover of nature. There is a species of lark that breeds in the vicinity of Labrador and Hudson's Bay, which has some of the musical

habits of the skylark. But though they have been occasionally heard to sing in New England, while on their passage to a southern latitude, in the month of October, they cannot be reckoned among our own singing birds. The whippoorwill is our Philomel, though his monotonous notes hardly deserve to be called a song. There is a species of snipe in this country, which has some of the habits of the skylark, rising like that bird, both in the morning, and in the evening, just after dark. After chirping awhile, he commences a spiral flight upwards, beginning in a wide circle, which continually narrows as he ascends, until he has arrived at the summit of his flight. He then sustains himself in a hovering position for the space of about half a minute, chattering and chirping very agreeably; after which, he descends in a spiral flight to the ground. This amusement is continued for the space of two or three hours.

The little hair-bird that sings incessantly in the mornings of spring and early summer, often utters his single trilling note, at intervals throughout the night, in May and June; but his notes are not much louder than those of a grasshopper. The rose-breasted grossbeak, whose notes I have never had the good fortune to hear, is said to be a nocturnal warbler. This bird is seldom seen in the New England States. It is said to frequent the remote north-west territory; and the species is numerous in the forests along the south shore of Lake Erie, where it breeds. These birds are said to pass the greater part of the night in singing, in the most delightful manner.

The ornithologists of the Old and New continents have long been at variance in their opinions of the comparative merits of their native singing birds. Buffon,

who wrote, not from his own observations, but from the accounts of travellers, declared the birds of America to be unmusical. This was the general opinion of Europeans, until Alexander Wilson published his work on the Birds of the United States. Wilson was a Scotchman, and was familiar with the notes of the European warblers, having been from his early youth an ardent lover of nature and a curious observer of the habits of birds. He pronounced the birds of this continent to be superior to those of Europe in their powers of song. Other European naturalists have declared in favor of their own birds. Audubon subscribes to the opinion of Wilson; but I am inclined to believe that both of these naturalists were misled by their own enthusiasm, and by their attachment to the American birds with whom they had been so long familiar. I doubt whether we have a single warbler whose native notes equal those of the nightingale, or of either the skylark or the woodlark of Europe. At the same time, I am prepared to say that I believe no bird on the face of the earth, can be found, any part of whose song is equal in mellowness, plaintiveness, and in what is generally understood as expression, to the five strains, never varied and yet never tiresome, of the common, little, olive-brown wood-thrush.

The powers of the American mocking-bird are unquestionably overrated. His native notes do not differ materially from those of the ferruginous thrush; but he has more power and compass than the latter, and is a more inveterate singer. The mocking-bird has the defect of all the American thrushes, except the wood-thrush, which is a want of continuity in their song. Their different strains are separated by a pause which greatly injures their effect. Hence they appear to be

wanting in enthusiasm, never warbling as if in ecstasy, like the bobolink, the grass-finch, and the canary bird. The imitative powers of the mocking-bird are chiefly confined to the imitation of separate sounds. He will imitate the crying of a chicken, the mewing of a cat, the whistling of a quail, and the single strains of many other birds. But he is never heard to give a perfect imitation of the continued song of any bird whose notes are difficult of execution. This the bobolink, when caged, and several other birds, will do to perfection.

The following Table of the comparative merits of the British singing birds, was prepared by Hon. Daines Barrington. The Table of the American singing birds, I have prepared after the manner of Mr. Barrington's table, but do not design it as affording any criterion by which the British birds may be compared with those of our own country. If these two tables be generally correct, it will be seen that the thrushes which take the first rank among American singing birds, take only about a third rank among those of Great Britain. Two of the most celebrated warblers among the latter, — the nightingale and the blackcap, — are *Sylvias*, while there is not one species of this tribe in New England that is remarkable for its powers of song. The birds that make the greater part of the melody that pervades our woods and fields in New England, and which would be the most sadly missed, if their species were to become extinct, are the common robin, the grass-finch, the wood-thrush, and the song-sparrow.

Table of the comparative merits of British Singing Birds, in which 20 is supposed to be the point of perfection. By Daines Barrington.

	Mellowness of Tone.	Sprightly Notes.	Plaintive Notes.	Compass.	Execution.
Nightingale	19	14	19	19	19
Skylark	4	19	4	18	18
Wood-lark	18	4	17	12	8
Titlark	12	12	12	12	12
Linnet	12	16	12	16	18
Goldfinch	4	19	4	12	12
Chaffinch	4	12	4	8	8
Greenfinch	4	4	4	4	6
Hedge Sparrow	6	0	6	4	4
Aderdavine, or Siskin	2	4	0	4	4
Red Poll	0	4	0	4	4
Thrush	4	4	4	4	4
Blackbird	4	4	0	2	2
Robin	6	16	12	12	12
Wren	0	12	0	4	4
Red Sparrow	0	4	0	2	2
Blackcap, or Mock Nightingale,	14	12	12	14	14

Table of the comparative merits of American Singing Birds, prepared after the manner of the preceding table, in which 20 is supposed to be the point of perfection.

	Mellowness of Tone.	Sprightly Notes.	Plaintive Notes.	Compass.	Execution.
Mocking-Bird	18	12	4	19	12
Red Thrush	18	10	6	14	12
Wood-Thrush	19	4	19	4	4
Hermit Thrush	18	4	12	12	10
Cat-Bird	4	6	4	6	6
Robin	18	8	10	8	8
Song-Sparrow	9	10	8	16	16
Grass-Finch	12	14	12	12	12
Field Sparrow	16	8	14	10	10
Hemp Bird	6	6	4	6	6
American Linnet	12	12	8	8	12
Bobolink	10	18	0	10	12

TABLE — *Continued.*

	Mellowness of Tone.	Sprightly Notes.	Plaintive Notes.	Compass.	Execution.
Wren	6	16	0	9	9
Red-eyed Vireo	6	4	2	6	6
Common Vireo	6	4	4	4	4
Indigo Bird	2	2	0	2	2
Yellow Throat	2	2	0	2	2
Golden Oriole	12	12	0	4	4
Bluebird	18	0	8	2	2
Whippoorwill	10	0	8	2	2
Purple Martin	10	10	0	5	8

XVI.

M A Y

THE month of May is often personified as a beautiful virgin, in the early ripeness of her charms; and he who is insensible to female beauty and loveliness, seems to be endowed with hardly less of the noble attributes of humanity than he who, without rapture, can behold the lovely face of nature at the present time. Our spring does not, like the same season, in high northern latitudes, awake suddenly into perfect verdure, out of the bosom of the snows; but lingers along for more than two months from its commencement, like that long twilight of purple and crimson that leads up the mornings in summer. And there is a benevolent provision for our happiness in this prolongation of the season of hopes and promises, though frequently interrupted by short periods of wintry gloom. Anticipation thus prolongs its abode in our hearts, and affords us something like an extension of the period of youth, and its exhilarating fancies.

Our ideas of the month of May, being in a great measure derived from the descriptions of English poets and rural authors, abound in many pleasing fallacies. There are no seas of waving grass and bending grain,

in the May of New England; and not until the month is nearly spent, have the greater part of the forest trees put forth their blossoms. Nature is not yet clothed in the fulness of her beauty; but in many respects she is lovelier than she ever will be in the future. Her very imperfections are charming, inasmuch as they are the budding of perfection, and afford us the agreeable sentiment of beauty, united with that of progression. There is a charm in that species of imperfection, which, so far from implying defect, is but the evidence of increasing loveliness, and more interesting than perfection itself, which is necessarily associated with the idea of discontinued progression.

It is the influence of this sentiment that renders a young girl more lovely and interesting with her unfinished graces, than when she has attained the completion of her charms. But by confounding imperfection with defect, we are often led to admire even the foibles of youth, under the vain conceit, that a foible may ripen into a virtue. As the buds only of a plant will produce leaves and flowers, and as the tender spines will never produce any thing but thorns — thus in the youthful character, it is only the unripened and imperfect graces that will ever become virtues, while the foibles, if not pruned off, will surely harden into vices.

One of the most agreeable pursuits connected with the study of nature, is to watch the progress of vegetation, from the earliest greenness of the landscape, and the first sprouting of the herbs, unfolding of the leaves, and opening of the buds, until every herb, tree, and flower has expanded and brightened into the full radiance of summer. While the earth exhibits only a few occasional stripes of verdure, along the borders of the

shallow pools and rivulets, and on the hill-sides, where they are watered by the oozing fountains just beneath the surface, we may observe the beautiful drapery of the tasselled trees and shrubs, varying in color from a light yellow, to a dark orange or brown, and robing the swamps with a flowery splendor, that forms a striking contrast with the general nakedness of the plain. As the hues of this drapery fade by the withering of the catkins, the leaf buds of the trees gradually put off their scaly coverings, in which the infant bud has been cradled during the winter; and the tender fan-shaped leaves in plaited folds and of different hues, come forth in millions, and yield to the whole forest a golden and ruddy splendor, like the tints of the clouds that curtain the summer horizon. Though there is an indefinable beauty in the infinitely varied hues of the foliage at this time, yet this is far from being the most attractive spectacle of the season. While the trees are expanding their leaves, the earth is daily becoming greener with every night-fall of dew, and thousands of flowers awake into life with every morning sun. At first a few violets appear on the hill-sides, increasing daily in numbers and brightness, until they are more numerous than the stars of heaven; then a single dandelion, that appears but as the harbinger of millions in less than a week — all gradually multiply, and bring along in their rear a countless troop of anemones, saxifrages, geraniums, buttercups, columbines, and everlastings, until the landscape is gemmed with the universal wreath of spring.

One of the earliest flowering shrubs of the season, and one of the most beautiful, on close inspection, with its evergreen, myrtle-like foliage, its slender drooping branches, and its long rows of white cup-shaped blos-

soms, like those of the lily of the valley, is the low andromeda. It is the first of its elegant tribe: it grows along the borders of ponds and meres, and is in flower as soon as the first of May. Similar in beauty to the andromeda, and appearing very early on the turf that covers the edges of the gray rocks, we observe a very delicate and humble shrub, which, if it bore no fruit, would be greatly prized for its flowers. It is the low blueberry, one of the prettiest vernal ornaments of our barren hills. It seldom rises a foot in height, and is gemmed with thick clusters of little flower-cups, of a pearly whiteness, slightly tinged with red. This humble shrub is rapidly succeeded by all the varieties of the blueberry, until the hills are all glowing with their blossoms, and the whole atmosphere is perfumed with their fragrance. These are the shrubs in our land that most nearly resemble the heaths, those most exquisite of nature's floral productions, which are not to be found among our native plants.

May opens with a few blossoms of the coltsfoot, the liverwort, the buckbean, and the Solomon's seal; and quite a multitude of a humble species of blue violets, of the kind that delights in sprinkling the grassy mounds in our country graveyards, are scattered over the southern slopes of the pastures. After May-day, every morning sun is greeted by a fresh troop of these little fairy visitants, until every knoll sparkles with them, and every pathway is embroidered with them, as if they were planted there on purpose to cheer the heart of man. At an early period the green pastures are so full of dandelions and buttercups, that they seem to be smiling upon us from every border. Children are always greatly delighted with these flowers, and they cannot look upon them without sudden emotions of

cheerfulness and hilarity. After these flowers have appeared, our eyes, as they wander over the village landscape, will rest upon hundreds of young children, on a sunny afternoon, who have left their active sports, to gather these brightest gems of the season, with which they have associated many interesting superstitious conceits, and whose novelty gives them a tenfold value in their sight. Soon after this, the fields appear in the fulness of their vernal splendor; wild geraniums in the borders of the woods and copses, white and yellow violets, ginsengs, bellworts, cornels, silverweeds, and cinque-foils bring up the rear in the procession of May; and during all this time, those little flowers, which have been very aptly chosen as the symbols of innocence (the *Houstonia cerulea*) commencing in the latter part of April, with a few scanty blossoms, grow every day more and more abundant, until their countless millions resemble a thin but interminable wreath of snow-flakes, distributed over the hills and plains.

The air, at this time, is scented with every variety of perfumes, and every new path in our rambling brings us into a new atmosphere, as well as a new prospect. It is during the prevalence of a still south wind, that the herbs and flowers exhale their most agreeable odors. Plants generate more fragrance in a warm air, on account of the greater rapidity of their growth; and if the wind is still and moist, the odors as they escape, do not rise so high, and are not so widely dissipated, being retained nearer the surface of the earth, by mixing with the invisible moisture of the atmosphere. The best time for rambling, if we would breathe the sweet odors of flowers, is when a perfect calm prevails among the elements, when the weather is rather sultry, and

while the beams of the sun are tinged with a kind of ruddy glow, by shining through an almost invisible haze. A blind man might then determine by the perfumes of the air, as he was led over the country, whether he was in meadow or upland, and distinguish the nature of the vegetation with which he was surrounded. There is a constant change of odors, as we pass from one place to another, and the fragrance of the atmosphere yields no inconsiderable part of the pleasure of an excursion, in the month of May.

Now let the dweller in the city who, abounding in all luxurious possessions, sighs for that contentment which his wealth has not procured, come forth from the dust and confinement of the town, and pay a short visit to nature in the country. Let him come in the afternoon, when the declining sun casts a beautiful sheen upon the tender leaves of the forest, and while tens of thousands of birds are chanting in full chorus, from an overflow of those delightful sensations, that fill the hearts of all creatures, who worship nature in her own temples, and do obedience to her beneficent laws. I would lead him to a commanding view of the lovely prospect, that he may gaze awhile upon those objects, which he has so often admired on the canvas of the artist, exhibited here in all their living beauty. While the gales are wafting to his senses the sweet perfumes of the surrounding groves and orchards, and the notes of warbling birds are echoing all around in harmonious confusion, I would point to him the neat little cottages, which are dotted about, like palaces of content in all parts of the landscape. I would direct his attention to the happy laborers in the field, and the neatly dressed, smiling, ruddy, and playful children, in their green and

flowery inclosures, and before the open doors of the cottages. I would then ask him if he is still ignorant of the cause of his own unhappiness, or of the abundant sources of enjoyment, which nature freely offers for the participation of all her creatures.

XVII.

WOOD SCENERY IN MAY.



DURING the space of one year, the woods present to the eye of the spectator five different aspects, corresponding with the infancy, the youth, the maturity, the tinting, and the dropping of the foliage. The first is the appearance assumed by the woods, when putting out their tender plaited leaves and blossoms in May, up to the time when they are fully expanded; the second when nearly all the trees have attained their brightest verdure, as in June, but exhibit a nearly uniform shade; the third in midsummer and later, when their verdure is less brilliant, and when each species and individual have acquired that particular shade of green that respectively characterizes them; the fourth is the appearance they assume when the leaves have acquired those variegated tints that precede their fall, and which are erroneously attributed to the action of frost; the fifth and last is the naked appearance of the winter forest, when the evergreens alone retain their verdure. These ever changing aspects of the woods are sources of continual pleasure to the observer of nature, and have in all ages afforded themes for the poet, and subjects for the painter.

Of all these phases, the one that is presented to the eye in the month of May is by far the most delightful, on account of the infinite variety of tints and shades in the budding and expanding leaves and blossoms, and the poetic relations of their appearance at this time to one of the most agreeable sentiments of the human soul. I allude to the idea of progression combined with the image of hope and activity. Nothing adds so greatly to the charms of a scene in nature, as any thing which is palpably suggestive of some pleasing moral sentiment. It is this quality that gives half their beauty to certain flowers; and the unfolding leaves and ripening hues of vegetation require no forced effort of ingenuity, to make apparent their analogy to the period of youth, and the season of hope; neither are the fading tints of autumn any less suggestive of life's decline. There are not many, however, who would not prefer the lightness of heart that is produced by these emblems of progression, and these signals of the reviving year, to the more poetic sentiment of melancholy, inspired by the scenes of autumn.

Among the different species of trees and shrubs, there is a notable difference in their habits of leafing and flowering; some wreathing their flowers upon the naked branches, before the expansion of the leaves, like the peach-tree, the elm, and the maple; others putting forth their leaves and flowers simultaneously, like the apple-tree and the cherry; others acquiring their full green vesture, before the appearance of their flowers, as the lilac, the elder, the rose, and the viburnum. When we observe these multiplied and beautiful arrangements, we cannot avoid associating them with the benevolence of nature; and we are prone to regard her as an affectionate parent who has instituted these phenomena, in

order to present at all times the greatest amount of beauty to the eye, and to guard us from all that weariness that is sure to follow the long continuance of one unchangeable source of pleasure.

There is manifestly some connection between the tints of the half developed spring foliage, and those we observe in the decline of the year. The leaves of nearly all the trees and shrubs that are brightly colored in autumn, present a similar variety of tints in their tender-plaited foliage in May. This is very remarkable in the different species of the oak, whose half-developed leaves are deeply marked with purple, violet, and yellow stains, that fade entirely out as the leaf ripens and expands. Similar hues may be observed in the tender branches of many shrubs, as in those of the sumach, before they are hardened into wood. The young leaves of the whortleberry bushes, of the cornels, the sumachs, and viburnums, all brightly tinted in autumn, with purple, crimson, and orange, exhibit lighter shades of the same colors in their half expanded foliage.

The locust, on the contrary, unmarked by a single tint in the autumn, is seen arrayed in a light verditure at this season, unmixed with any other hues. The willows that incline to yellow after the harvest, show, in their vernal leaf, the same yellow tinge, that gives them a remarkably lively hue. Their golden aments add to this brilliancy, which is also in harmony with their light green and silvery spray. The birches have the same brilliant verdure, contrasted with the dark purple of their small branches, that renders their hues the more distinct and beautiful. It is all these different tendencies in the hues of the expanding foliage, that afford the woods such a charming variety of shades during the present month; and it seems to be the design of

nature to foretoken, in the infancy of the plants, some of those habits that mark both their maturity and their decline, by giving them a faint shade of those colors that distinguish them in autumn.

If we take our stand on an elevation that overlooks an extensively wooded country, which is diversified with way-side trees and orchards, we may witness the full charm of this variety. The elms, which in this part of the country are chiefly found by our road sides, and in the inclosures of our dwellings, have shed their brown and purple blossoms; and their light green foliage, varying greatly in individuals, is mostly observed in solitary masses, or in occasional rows along the streets. The elm is in the perfection of its beauty at this time, when its verdure is marked by a brilliancy that fades before midsummer. After June, the foliage of the elm is dull and lifeless in its hues; and the tree is beautiful only on account of the flowing outline and graceful sweep of its branches.

If we next turn our eyes upon the woods, we may behold a spectacle of infinitely varied splendor. Masses of purple and cinereous foliage are presented by the oaks, enlivened by the bright green aments, that hang luxuriantly from their branches. Among them are interspersed the purer and more lively green of the beech-trees, rendered still more light and airy by their pale ashen stems; also the slender spiry forms of the birch, whose purple sprays afford by contrast, a peculiar lustre to their shining verdure, from the lofty black birch that overtops the other forest groups, to the graceful coppices of white birch, whose leaves already exhibit their tremulous habit, when fanned by the passing winds.

Though we cannot find in May those brilliant colors

among the leaves of the forest trees, which are the crowning glory of autumn, yet the present month is more abundant in contrasts than any other period. These contrasts increase in beauty and variety until about the first of June. In early May, set apart from the general nakedness of the woods, may be seen, here and there, a clump of willows full of bright golden aments, maples with buds, blossoms, and foliage of crimson, and interspersed among them, junipers, hemlocks, and other evergreens, that stand out from their assemblages, like the natives of another clime. As the month advances, while these contrasts remain, new ones are continually appearing, as one tree after another assumes its vernal drapery, each exhibiting a tint peculiar not only to the species, but often to the individual and the situation, until hardly two trees in the whole wood are alike in color. As the foliage ripens, the different shades of green become more thoroughly blended into a single uniform tint. But ere the process is completed, the fruit-trees have expanded their blossoms, and have brought a new spectacle of contrasts into view. First of all, the peach-trees with their bright pink flowers, that appear before the leaves, and cause the tree to resemble a single and uniform bouquet: then the pear-trees, with corols of perfect whiteness, internally fringed with brown anthers, like long dark eyelashes, that give them almost the countenance of life; then the cherry-trees, with their pure white blossoms, thickly enveloped in green foliage; and last of all, the apple-trees, with blossoms of every variety of shade, between a bright crimson or purple and a pure white, all come forth, one after another, until the whole landscape seems to be wreathed in bloom.

During the last week in May, were you to stand on

an eminence that commands an extensive view of the country, you would be persuaded that the prospect is far more magnificent than at midsummer. At this time you look not upon individuals, but groups. Before you lies an ample meadow, nearly destitute of trees except a few noble elms, standing in their blended majesty and beauty, combining in their forms the gracefulness of the palm with the grandeur of the oak ; here and there a clump of pines, and long rows of birches, willows and alders bordering the streams that glide along the valley, and exhibiting every shade of greenness in their foliage. In all parts of the prospect, separated by square fields of tillage of lighter or darker verdure, according to the nature of their crops, you behold numerous orchards, some on the hill-side receiving the direct beams of the sun, and others on level ground, exhibiting their shady rows with their flowers just in that state of advancement that serves to show the budding trees, which are red and purple, in beautiful opposition to the fully blown trees, which are white. Such spectacles of flowering orchards are seen in all parts of the country, as far as the eye can reach, along the thinly inhabited road sides and farms.

The effect produced by the flowering of trees is less conspicuous in our forests than in our orchards and gardens ; but the dazzling whiteness of the Florida cornel, rising up amidst the variegated masses of forest verdure, attracts the attention of every traveller. The flowering trees of our forests are chiefly of the amenaceous tribes, whose flowers serve rather to add gayety and variety to their tints, than any positive beauty of colors. Among the shrubbery, however, there are many species that are made attractive by their blossoms, and yield to the pastures and coppices a more beautiful

appearance than any thing we have observed in the woods. While the woods are still gleaming with the variegated tints of the sprouting foliage, you may behold, rising up in solitary brightness, arrayed with a profusion of white flowers and silvery green leaves, the tall branches of the swamp pyrus, a shrub that bears the earliest flowers and fruits of the forest. The pyrus is the forerunner of many beautiful flowering shrubs. After this appear in succession the common thorn, with its white rosaceous flowers in lovely circular clusters; the barberry, with its golden racemes fringing the branches from their extremities, almost to their roots; the wild dwarf cherry, with its spikes of gaudy but delicate blossoms arranged fantastically at right angles with the twigs that support them; — all these appear one after another, until at length, as if nature was desirous of concentrating all our admiration upon a single plant, appears the beautiful Canadian rhodora, which marks the era of the departure of spring, and the commencement of the reign of summer.

In striking opposition to the scenes I have described, we may observe in different parts of the country a densely wooded swamp, with the tops of the trees hardly towering above the level of the surrounding landscape, covered with the dark green sombre foliage of northern cypresses. Even this renders the remaining prospect more cheerful, by acting as a foil to the pleasant scenes that everywhere surround us. The very notes of the birds seem to harmonize with the character of the wood, and serve to enliven the contrasts that are presented to the eye. In the open flowery plain we hear thousands of chattering and musical birds — the wren in the gardens, the merry bobolink in the grassy meadows, and the oriole among the blos-

soms of the fruit-trees, while from the dark cypress groves we hear the scream of the jay, the cawing of the raven, blended occasionally with the liquid notes of the sylvias and solitary thrushes.

By making such observations, one may be satisfied that upon our barren hills nothing could be substituted, that would equal in any respect of beauty and ornament, the trees and shrubs which are indigenous to the situation. The practice of Great Britain, operating as an example to American improvers, has been fatal to the beauty of many a delightful spot in our own country. The native garniture of our own fields, modified by the hand of man, as exemplified in certain tracts to be seen in every old settlement, exceeds all which the combined wealth and taste of Great Britain could rear in the place of it. Vain are all attempts to improve the face of nature by dressing her in ornaments borrowed from a foreign clime. That taste which recommends a system of improvements based upon any principle, save that of preserving the whole indigenous growth of our fields and woods, is barbarous, and will ultimately be spurned with indignation, by every true lover of beauty and of nature.

XVIII.

ON MULTIPLYING THE BIRDS AROUND OUR DWELLINGS.



THE presence of birds as companions of a country residence is considered by all a desirable circumstance, second only to woods, flowers, green fields, and the general advantages of prospect. Without birds, the landscape, if not wanting in beauty, would lack something which is necessary to the happiness of all men who are elevated above a state of gross sensualism. It is indeed highly probable that nature owes more to the lively motions, songs, and chattering of birds, for the influence of her charms, than to any other single accompaniment of terrestrial scenery. They are so intimately associated with all that is delightful in field and forest, with our early walks in the morning, our rest at noon-day, and our meditations at sunset, with the trees that spread their branches over our heads, and the vines and delicate mosses at our feet, that it is difficult to think of the one apart from the others. Through the voices of birds nature may be said to speak to us, and without them she would be but a dumb companion, whose beauty could hardly be felt.

It is customary, when speaking of the advantages of

birds, to treat of them as they have relation to the agricultural interest. Admitting the value of almost every species as destroyers of insects, I am disposed to consider their importance in this respect as only secondary to that which regards their pleasant companionship with man. Hence it is a matter of no small consequence to use the best means that have been discovered, to preserve the birds from destruction, and to multiply them about our dwellings. Very little attention has been paid to this subject. A few laws have been made for their preservation; but these have seldom been enforced. Occasionally a paragraph in the newspapers has pleaded for their protection; but as yet no full and elaborate essay, devoted to this object, has made its appearance. I believe the farmer would promote his own thrift by extending a watchful care over the lives of every species of birds; but the smaller tribes are considered the most useful. And it would seem as if nature had given them their beauty of plumage, and endowed them with song, on purpose to render them attractive, that man might thereby be induced to preserve a race of creatures so necessary to his pleasures, and so valuable to his interest.

There are two methods of preserving the birds: the first consists in omitting to destroy them; the second in promoting the growth of certain trees, shrubs, and other plants on which they depend for shelter and subsistence. The birds, considered in relation to trees and shrubbery, may be divided into two classes. First, the familiar birds that live in our orchards and gardens, and increase in numbers in proportion as the woods are cleared, and the lands devoted to tillage. To this class belong several of our sparrows, the wren, the bluebird, the American robin, the bobolink, the linnet, the yellow-

bird, and some others. The second are the less familiar birds that frequent the woods and wild pastures, and which would probably be exterminated by reducing the whole forest to park or tillage. Among these may be named the little wood-sparrow, one of the sweetest of American songsters, nearly all the thrushes, the towhee-finch, and many of the sylvias, and wood-peckers.

To preserve the first of these species little is necessary to be done except to avoid destroying them; but to insure the multiplication of the second, we must study their haunts, the substances provided by nature for their food, the plants that afford them shelter, and to a certain extent labor to preserve all these for their use. The little wood-sparrow is never heard in the heart of our villages, unless they are closely surrounded by woods. Yet this bird does not live in the woods. He frequents the pastures which are overgrown with wild shrubs, and their undergrowth of vines, mosses, and ferns, that unite them imperceptibly with the green-sward by which they are surrounded. He is always found in the whortleberry pastures, and probably makes his repast on these simple fruits, in their season. He builds his nest on the ground, in a mossy knoll, under the protection of a thicket. Every bird is more or less attached to a particular character of grounds and shrubbery; and if we destroy this character, we drive this particular species from our neighborhood, to seek in other places its natural habitats. Hence we may account for the comparative silence that pervades the grounds of some of our most admired country-seats; for with respect to the wants of even our most familiar birds, it is possible that cultivation may be carried too far.

There is no danger that, for many years to come, our lands will be so entirely stripped of their native growth of herbs, trees, and shrubs, as to leave the birds without their natural shelter. But there is danger that they may be wholly driven out of particular localities, and that the inhabitants may thereby be deprived of the presence of many delightful warblers. In all the densely populated districts, the want of them would be the more painfully felt, because they contain a greater number of cultivated people who can appreciate these blessings of nature. Let us then proceed in our inquiry concerning the means by which we may multiply the birds around our habitations.

In every locality in which all the native species of birds are abundant, we find the following conditions:—First, there is a large proportion of cultivated land, numerous and thrifty orchards, extensive fields of grass and grain, all well provided with watercourses. When these conditions are present, the familiar birds already named will be numerous. If these cultivated lands are intermingled with pastures abounding in thickets and wild shrubbery, and all the indigenous undergrowth belonging to the same, we may then hear the voices of the less familiar birds, which are in many respects superior in song to the tenants of our orchards and gardens. Wild shrubbery and its carpet of grasses, vines, mosses, and other cryptogamous plants, form the condition that is necessary to the preservation of the half-familiar tribes. If, with all these circumstances, the land has a good proportion of wood in its primitive state, or in one resembling it, not divested of its undergrowth, containing a large variety of oaks, maples, pines, junipers, sumachs, and cornels, we may find the wood-thrush, the hermit-thrush, the redstart, the oven-bird, the creeper,

the jay, and woodpeckers of various species whose habitats are the wild woods.

Among the shrubs that are most useful to the birds may be named in general all that produce a wholesome seed or fruit. The viburnums, the cornels, all the species of the whortleberry tribe, the elder, the *Celastrus scandens*, and the common sumachs, are always abundant where there are goodly numbers of the less familiar birds. Among the herbs and smaller plants that are useful to them are the Solomon's seal, the partridge berry, the *Mitchella repens*, the dewberry, or evergreen blackberry, and all the indigenous grasses. If we clear our woods of their undergrowth, and convert them into parks, we do in the same proportion diminish the numbers of certain species of birds. A partial clearing is undoubtedly beneficial even to the most solitary tribes, by promoting a greater variety of vegetation. But the removal of all this miscellaneous undergrowth would serve as effectually to banish the red-thrush, the catbird, the wood and hermit-thrush, and many species of sylvias, as we should extirpate the squirrels by destroying all the oaks, beeches, hazels, hickories, and chestnuts.

One of the principal ornaments of a country-seat is lawn. A smooth shaven green is delightful to the eye, at all times, especially when just emerging from the city, or after one has been for some hours rambling among the rude scenes of nature. But lawn is a luxury that is obtained at the expense of all birds that nestle in the ground and the low shrubbery. The scythe may be as great an exterminator of such birds, as the gun of the fowler. The song sparrows build their nest upon the ground, in the most familiar places, where they can feel secure from disturbance. Not a

rod from our dwellings these little birds may have their nests, if the right conditions are there. They are commonly built on the side of a mound, where the grasses and mosses are overrun with blackberry vines and wild rose-bushes. Familiar as they are, they do not nestle among exotics. He who would entice them to breed in his inclosures must not be too particular in preserving that kind of neatness in his grounds, which consists in eradicating every native shrub and wild briar, as a useless weed.

Hedge-rows, though often ignorantly supposed to be the nurseries of birds, are really great checks to their multiplication. A hedge-row cannot be well maintained without care in keeping its roots clear of grass and other herbage, which are important to the birds; and the habit of clipping it renders it almost barren of fruit. I am inclined to think that, for pleasing effects, no less than for the benefit of the birds, the most desirable fence is one made of rough small timber passed through upright posts. I would then encourage the growth of all kinds of native shrubbery, on each side of it, forming a miscellaneous hedge, the more agreeable because unshorn by art. It is this spontaneous growth of shrubbery and other wild plants that constitutes one of the picturesque charms of the old New England stonewall. We seldom see one that is not covered on each side, more or less, with roses, brambles, spiræa, viburnums, and other native vines and shrubs, so that in some of our open fields, the stonewalls, with their accompaniment of vines, flowers, and shrubbery, are the most attractive objects in the landscape. Along the base of these walls, where the plough does not reach, nature calls out the rue-leaved anemone, the violet, the cranesbill, the bellwort, the delicate pink convolvulus, and

many other native flowers of exceeding beauty, while the rest of the field is devoted to tillage.

An ignorant agricultural boor, whose mind was never taught to stray beyond the barnyard or potato-patch, might grudge nature this narrow strip on each side of his fences, though she never fails to crowd it with beauty. I have seen indeed intelligent farmers who seemed to consider it an offence against neatness and order, to allow nature these little privileges, and who employed their hired men to keep down every plant that dared to peep out from underneath the fence, without a license from the cultivator. By encouraging this miscellaneous growth of woody and herbaceous plants on each side of every rustic fence, we provide an important means of security for the birds, and supply them, in the close vicinity of our dwellings, with an abundance of those seeds and berries which are necessary for their subsistence.

Such a miscellaneous hedge-row would constitute a perfect aviary for certain species of birds; and the advantages they would confer upon the farmer, by ridding his land of noxious insects, would amply compensate for the space thus left unimproved. The farmer seldom raises any crops in this narrow space; but, like the dog in the manger, he neither uses it himself nor will he leave it to nature and the birds. Once in two or three years, he lets a fire run over it; or, at an expense which is entirely useless to himself, he wantonly cuts down every beautiful thing that springs up there to remind him, while employed in the labors of the field, of the primitive charms of nature.

A common hedge-row would occupy as much space as this rustic fence, including the plants on each side of it; and no clipped hedge-row could be made half so

beautiful as one formed by this wild thicket of vines and bushes, growing at liberty, and wreathing an endless variety of blossoms and foliage around and over the fence. Then might we hear the notes of the wood-sparrow and the yellow-throat in the very centre of our villages, and hundreds of little birds of different species would cheer us by their warbling, where at present only an occasional solitary one is seen. From the windows of our dwelling-houses we might also observe the habits of many rare birds that would soon acquire an unwonted familiarity, by having their abodes in the busy neighborhood of man.

By thus extending our protection to the birds we make no sacrifice of land, and we lay the foundation for certain contrasts, that must affect every beholder with a pleasing emotion. A happy contrast is one of the most striking circumstances either in a landscape or a work of art. Hence rugged hills, rising suddenly out of a level and fertile plain, are more interesting than general undulations of surface; and how much soever we may admire a tract of land in a high state of improvement, it is delightful while rambling over it to find a little miniature wilderness, or a plat of ground covered with the spontaneous productions of nature. It is equally pleasing, on the other hand, when we are roaming a forest, where every thing that grows is wild and primitive, and where the only birds we hear are the shy and timid thrushes and sylvias, to encounter a little farm in a perfect state of cultivation, and a neat cottage, surrounded by the familiar birds of our orchards and gardens. These strips of wild vegetation bordering the fences would form a pleasant contrast with the cultivated lands, and the contrast would be beautiful in pro-

portion to the entire primitive character of the one and the high state of improvement of the other.

From the earliest period of our history, it has been customary among our people to encourage the multiplication of swallows, by the erection of bird-houses in their gardens and inclosures. This custom was probably derived from the aborigines, who were in the habit of furnishing a hospitable retreat for the purple martin, by fixing hollow gourds or calabashes upon the branches of trees near their cabins. It is generally believed that these active little birds serve, by their unceasing annoyances, to drive away the hawks and crows from their vicinity, performing thereby an essential service to the farmer. This pleasing and useful custom has of late years grown unaccountably into disuse. The chattering of swallows is one of the delightful accompaniments of a vernal morning; and that of the martin, in particular, is the most enlivening of all sounds from animated nature. As the birds of the swallow tribe subsist upon insects that inhabit the atmosphere, it is not in our power to increase their means of subsistence. Hence the only means we can use for increasing their numbers is to supply them with a shelter and retreat. By such appliances it would be easy to keep their numbers up to a level with the quantities of insects that constitute their prey.

The wren and the bluebird are encouraged by similar accommodations. But as these birds are not social in their habits, a separate box must be supplied for each pair of birds. The wren is an indefatigable destroyer of insects, and one of the most interesting of our familiar songsters, singing like the vireo, during the heat of the day, when most other birds are silent. The blue-

bird, which is hardly less familiar, delights in the hollow branch of an old tree in the orchard, but would be equally satisfied with an artificial imitation of the rude conveniences supplied him by nature.

If we observe all these requirements, when employed in tilling a farm or in laying out a country-seat, we do but avoid the destruction of those beautiful relations which nature has established throughout the earth. The plough and the scythe may do their work for man, without interfering with the wants of those creatures whom nature has appointed as the enliveners of his toil. Every estate might be made to represent the whole country, in its tilled fields and cultivated lawn, with their proper admixture of forest, thicket, and primitive herbage. Then, while sitting at our windows, the eye would be delighted by the sight of little coppices of wild shrubbery, with their undergrowth of mosses, ferns, and Christmas evergreens, rising in the midst of the smooth lawn, and in charming opposition to the flower beds, that are distributed in other parts of the ground. In these miniature wilds, the small birds would find a shelter, suited to all their wants and instincts, and in return for our hospitality, would act as the sentinels of our orchards and gardens, and the musicians to attend us in our daily labor and recreations.

XIX.

J U N E .



ALREADY do we feel the influence of a more genial sky ; a maturer verdure gleams from every part of the landscape, and a prouder assemblage of wild flowers reminds us of the arrival of summer. The balmy south-west reigns the undisturbed monarch of the weather ; the chill breezes rest quietly upon the serene bosom of the deep, and the ocean, as tranquil as the blue canopy of heaven, yields itself to the warm influences of the summer sun, as if it were conscious of the blessing of his beams. The sun rides, like a proud conqueror, over three quarters of the heavens ; and as if delighted with his victory over the darkness, smiles with unwonted complacency upon the beautiful things which are rejoicing in his presence. Twilight refuses to leave the brows of night ; and her morning and evening rays meet and blend together at midnight, beneath the polar sphere. She twines her celestial rosy wreaths around the bosoms of the clouds, that rival in beauty the terrestrial garlands of summer. The earth and the sky seem to emulate each other in their attempts to beautify the temples of nature and of the Deity ; and while the one is hanging out her drapery of silver and vermilion over the sapphirine arches

of the firmament; the other is spangling the green plains and mountains with living gems of every hue, and crowns the whole landscape with lilies and roses.

The mornings and evenings have acquired a delightful temperature, that invites us to rise prematurely from our repose, to enjoy the greater luxury of the balmy breezes. The dews hang heavily upon the herbage, and the white frosts have gone away to join the procession of the chill autumnal nights. The little modest spring flowers are half hidden beneath the prouder foliage of the flowers of summer; the violets can hardly look upon you from under the broad leaves of the fern; and the anemones, like some little unpretending beauty in the midst of a glittering crowd, are scarcely observed as they are fast fading beneath the shade of the tall shrubbery. The voice of the early song sparrow and the tender warbling of the bluebird, are but faintly audible amidst the chorus of louder warblers; the myriads of piping creatures are silent in the wet places, and the tree-frogs, having taken up their song, make a constant melodious croaking, after nightfall from the wooded swamps. The summer birds have all arrived; their warbling resounds from every nook and dell; thousands of their nests are concealed in every grove and orchard, among the branches of the trees, or on the ground beneath a tuft of shrubbery; egg-shells, of various hues, are cast out of their nests, and the callow young lie in the open air, exposed to the tender mercies of the genial month of June.

The season of anticipation has passed away; the early month of fruition has come; the hopes of our vernal morning have ripened into realities; we no longer look into the future for our enjoyments, but we revel at length in all those pleasures, from which we

expected to derive a perfect satisfaction. The month of June is emblematical of the period of life that immediately succeeds the departure of youth, when all our sources of enjoyment are most abundant, and our capacity for the higher kinds of pleasures has attained maturity, and when the only circumstance that damps our feelings, is the absence of that lightness of heart, arising from a hopeful looking forward to the future. Our manhood and our summer have arrived; but our youth and our spring have gone by; and though we have the enjoyment of all we anticipated, yet with the fruition hope begins to languish, and in the present exists the fulness of our joys. The flowery treasures, foretold by the first blue violet, are blooming around us; the melodious concert, to which the little song sparrow warbled a sweet prelude in March, is now swelling from a full band of songsters, and the sweet summer climate that was harbored by an occasional south wind has arrived. But there is sadness in fruition. With all these voluptuous gales and woodland minstrelsies, we cannot help wishing for a renewal of those feelings with which we greeted the first early flower, and listened to the song of the earliest returning bird.

Nature has thus nearly equalized the enjoyments of every season. When our actual joys are least abundant, fancy is near at hand, to supply us with the visions of those pleasures, of which we cannot enjoy the substance; filling our souls in spring with the hope of the future; comforting us in autumn with the memory of the past, and amusing us in winter, with a tranquil retrospection of the whole year, and the pleasant watching for the dawn of another spring.

A change has taken place in the whole aspect of the woods, since the middle of the last month. The light

yellowish green of the willows and thorns, the purple of the sumach and the various hues of other sprouting foliage have ripened into a dark uniform verdure. The grass as it waves in the meadows, gleams like the billows of the ocean; and the glossy surfaces of the ripe leaves of the trees as they tremble in the wind, glitter like millions of imperfect mirrors in the light of the sun. The petals of the fading blossoms are flying in all directions, as they are scattered by the fluttering gales, and cover, like flakes of snow, the whole surface of the orchards. The flowers of innumerable forest trees are in a state of maturity, and the yellow dust from their flower-cups, scattered widely over the earth, may be seen after showers, covering the edges of the beds of dried water-pools, in yellow circular streaks.

The pines and other coniferous trees are in flower during this month; and the golden hues of their blossoms contrast beautifully with the deep verdure of their foliage. These trees, like others, shed their leaves in autumn; but it is the foliage of the preceding year that falls, leaving that of the last summer still upon the trees. This foliage is very slowly perishable, and covers the earth where it falls, during all the year, with that brown, smooth, and fragrant carpet, which is so characteristic of a pine wood. Among the flowers which are conspicuous on this brown matted foliage is the purple ladies-slipper, whose inflated blossoms often burst upon the sight of the rambler, as if they had risen up by enchantment. In similar haunts the trientalis, unrivalled in the peculiar delicacy of its flowers, that issue from a single whorl of pointed leaves, supported upon a tall and slender footstalk, never fails to attract the attention of the botanist and the lover of nature.

Our gardens, during the first of this month exhibit few exotics more beautiful than the Canadian *Rhodora*, an indigenous shrub, which is at this time in full flower in the wild pastures. It is from two to five feet in height, and its brilliant purple flowers, unrivalled in delicacy, appear on the extremities of the branches, when the leaves are just beginning to unfold. It is rendered singularly attractive by the contrast between its purple hues, of peculiar resplendency, and the whiteness of the flowers of almost all other shrubs, at this season. This plant, by its flowering marks the commencement of summer, and may be considered an apt symbol of the brilliant and unrivalled charms of the month of June.

June is also the month of the *Arethusas* — those most charming flowers of the peat meadows — belonging to a tribe that is too delicate for cultivation. Like the beautiful birds of the forest, they were created for nature's own temples; and the divinities of the wood, under whose invisible protection they thrive, will not permit them to mingle with the multitude that grace the parterre. The cymbidiun, of a similar habit, the queen of the meadows, with larger flowers and more numerous clusters, the crimson orchis, that springs up by the river-sides, among the myrtle-like foliage of the craneberry and the nodding panicles of the quaking grass, like a spire of living flame; and the still more rare and delicate white orchis, that hidden in certain mossy dells in the woods, seldom feels the direct light of the sun, are all alike consecrated to nature and to solitude, as if they were designed to cheer the hearts of her humble votaries, with the sight of some thing that had not been appropriated for the exclusive adornment of the garden and the palace.

The rambler may already perceive a difference in the

characteristics of the flowers of this month and of the last. In May the prominent colors were white and the lighter shades of purple and lilac, in which the latter were but faintly blended. In June the purple shades predominate in the flowers, except those of the shrubs which are mostly white. The scarlet hues are seldom seen until after midsummer. The yellows seem to be confined to no particular season, being conspicuous in the dandelion, ranunculus, and coltsfoot of spring; in the potentillas, the senecios, and the loosestrifes of summer, and in the sunflowers, goldenrods, and many other tribes of autumn.

One of the most charming appearances of the present month, to one who is accustomed to the minute observation of nature's works, is the flowering of the grasses. Though this extensive tribe of plants is remarkable in no instances for the brilliancy of its flowers, yet there is no tribe that exhibits more beauty in their aggregations; some rearing their flowers in a compact head, like the herd's grass and the foxtail; others spreading them out in an erect panicle, like a tree, as the orchard grass and the common redtop; others appearing with a bristling head, like wheat and barley; and a countless variety of species, with nodding panicles, like the oat and the quaking grass. The greater number of the gramineous plants are in flower at the present time, and there are no other species which afford more attractions, to those who examine nature with the discriminating eye of science.

He who is accustomed to rambling is now keenly sensible of that community of property in nature, of which he cannot be deprived. The air of heaven is acknowledged to belong equally to all, and cannot be monopolized; but the land is apportioned into tracts

belonging to different owners, and the majority perhaps do not own a rood. Yet to a certain extent, and in a very important sense, the earth, the trees, the flowers, and the landscape are common property. He who owns a fine garden enjoys but little advantage over him who is without one. We are all free in this country to roam over the wide fields and pastures; we can eat of the fruits of the earth, and feast our eyes on the beauties of nature, as well as the owner of the largest possessions. A man is not poor, who while he possesses the comforts of life, is thus capable of enjoying the blessings of nature. His possessions are not circumscribed by fences and boundary lines. All the earth is his garden — cultivated without expense, and enjoyed without anxiety. He partakes of these bounties which cannot be confined to a legal possessor, and which Providence as a compensation to those who are worn with toil, or harassed with care, spreads out to gladden them with renewed hopes, and to warm their hearts with gratitude and benevolence.

June is of all months of the year the most delightful period of woodland minstrelsy. With the early birds that still continue their warbling, the summer birds have joined their louder and more melodious strains. Early in the morning, when the purple light of dawn first awakens one from sleep, and while the red rays that fringe the eastern arches of the sky, with a beautiful tremulous motion are fast brightening into a more dazzling radiance, we hear from the feathered tribe the commencement of their general hymn of gladness. There is first an occasional twittering, then a single performance from some early waker, then a gradual joining of voices, until at length there is a full chorus of song. Every few minutes some new voice joins in

the concert as if aroused by the beginners and excited by emulation until thousands of melodious voices seem to be calling us out from sleep, to the enjoyment of life and liberty.

After the sun has risen nearly to meridian height, the greater number of the birds that helped to swell the anthem of morn, discontinue their songs, and a comparative silence prevails during the heat of the day. The vireo, however, warbles incessantly, at all hours of daylight, from the lofty tree-tops in the heart of the villages; the oriole is still piping at intervals among the blossoms of the fruit-trees, and the merry bobolink never tires, during the heat of the day, while singing and chattering, as if in ecstasies, above and around the sitting place of his wedded mate. At the commencement of the sun's decline, the birds renew their songs; but the majority of the more familiar birds that linger about our orchards and gardens, are far less musical at sunset than at sunrise. I suppose they may be more annoyed by the presence of men, who are more accustomed to be out at a late hour in the evening, than at an early hour in the morning.

The hour preceding dusk in the evening, however, is the time when the thrushes, the most musical of birds, are loudest in their song. Several different species of this tribe of musicians, at a late hour, are almost the sole performers. The cat-bird, with a strain somewhat similar to that of the robin, less melodious, but more varied and quaint in its expression, is then warbling in those places, where the orchards and the wildwood meet and are blended together. The red-thrush, a bird still more retired in his habits, takes his station upon a tree that stands apart from the wood, and there pours

forth his loud and varied song, which may be heard above every other note. A little deeper in the woods, near the borders of streams, the wood-thrushes, the last to become silent, may be heard responding to one another, with their trilled and exquisite notes, unsurpassed in melody and expression, from the sun's early decline, until the purple of twilight has nearly departed. During all this time, and the greater part of the day, in the solemn depths of the forest, where almost all other singing birds are strangers, resounds the distinct, peculiar, and almost unearthly warbling of the hermit-thrush, who recites his different strains, with such long pauses, and with such a varied modulation, that they might be mistaken for the notes of several different birds.

At nightfall, though the air is no longer resonant with song, our ears are greeted with a variety of pleasing and romantic sounds. In the still darkness, apart from the village hum, may be heard the frequent fluttering of the wings of night birds, when the general silence permits their musical vibrations to resound distinctly from different distances, during their short, mysterious flights. These sounds, to which I used to listen with ravishment, in my early days, are more suggestive than music, and always come to my remembrance, as one of the delightful things connected with a summer evening in the country. At the same time, in my late evening rambles, I have often paused, to hear the responsive chirping of the snipes, in the open plains, during their season of courtship; and to watch their occasional whirling flight, as with whistling wings, they soar like the lark into the skies, to meet and warble together, above the darkness that envelops the earth. With the

same whirling flight, they soon descend again to the earth, and commence anew their responsive chirping. These alternate visits to the earth and the skies are continued for several hours. There is nothing very musical in the chirping of these birds; and their warbling in the heavens, when they have reached the summit of their ascent, is only a somewhat monotonous succession of sounds. But when, at this later time of life, I chance to hear a repetition of their notes, the whole bright page of youthful adventure is placed vividly before my mind. It is only at such times, that we feel the full influence of certain sounds of nature, in hallowing the period of manhood, with a recollection of early pleasures, and a renewal of those feelings, that come upon the soul like a fresh breeze and the sound of gurgling waters to the weary and thirsty traveller.

The evenings are now so delightful that it seems like imprisonment to remain within doors. Odors, sights, and sounds are at present so grateful and tranquillizing in their effects upon the mind, and so suggestive of all the bright period of youth, that they cannot be regarded as the mere pleasures of sense. The sweet emanations from beds of ripening strawberries, from plats of pinks and violets, from groves of flowering linden-trees, full of myriads of humming insects, from meadows odoriferous with clover, and sweet-scented grasses, all wafted in succession with every little shifting of the wind, breathe upon us one endless variety of fragrance. Then the perfect velvety softness of the evening air, the various melodies that come from every nook, tree, rock, dell, and fountain; the notes of birds, the chirping of insects, the hum of bees, the rustling of aspen leaves, the bubbling of fountains, the

dashing of waves and waterfalls, and the many beautiful things that greet our vision from earth, sea, and sky—all unite, as it were, to yield to mortals, who hope for immortality, a foretaste of the unspeakable joys of paradise.

XX.

A SUMMER NIGHT IN THE WOODS.

WHEN the decline of day is plainly perceptible in the lengthened shadows of the trees, and the more refreshing coolness of the atmosphere, many species of birds, that since morning have been silent, commence anew their vocal revelry. Evening comes not unattended by the same captivating splendors that usher in the morn, and the same melodies that herald her approach. As she descends from her pavilion of crimson and amber, to spread her twilight over the landscape, calling down the gentle dews from heaven and bringing refreshment to the drooping herbs, the heavens show forth their gladness in the myriad hues of sunset, and all animated nature raises a shout of music and thankfulness. But there is a pensiveness about the melodies of evening that sweetly harmonizes with the sober meditative hour; and the same birds, that in the morning pour out their melodious lays as from hearts full of rejoicing, now whisper them in accents more subdued, like the quiet breathing of the winds that are loath to disturb the sleep of the flowers.

Just before the sun's decline, the thrushes, which are our proper forest warblers, are unusually tuneful, and con-

tinue to sing until dark. The voice of the little wood-thrush is the last to be heard ; and when his notes have ceased, the night may be said to have commenced ; though even after this time, the sweet notes of the grassfinch, (the bush-sparrow,) are occasionally poured out from some station in the open fields. But in our woods, at this season, silence does not immediately ensue. A restlessness prevails among the feathered tribes, as if they were yet unprepared to renounce the pleasures of the day. At intervals, for the space of an hour after dusk, an occasional note of complaint is heard in the thicket from different birds, a shrill chirp from some of the little sylvias, the mewing of the cat-bird among the shrubbery, or the querulous *smack* of the red-thrush.

Suddenly, when the stillness of the night has become fully realized, the note of the whippoorwill resounds through the forest, with a solemn accent that pleasantly harmonizes with silence and darkness. There is something in his monotonous song that is disagreeable to many, who attribute to it a certain power of announcing a coming disaster. Its peculiar measured cadence, and the mystery that is connected with the bird, cause his notes to seem like the utterance of some prophetic message ; and it is said that he often tells a tale of sadness that will come before the falling of the leaf. But to those who assign the bird no oracular powers, and regard him only as one of the innocent tenants of the grove, his notes are musical and affecting. The song of the whippoorwill is a poor substitute for that of the nightingale ; but the melancholy it inspires is just sufficient to be an agreeable emotion, and adds impressiveness to the silent scenes around us.

Sometimes, for several minutes, hardly a voice from

any creature is heard; and the rustling of the night wind through the tremulous leaves of the birch, or its moaning among the high branches of the pines, resembling the murmurs of distant waters, are the only sounds that meet the ear. But this dreary stillness is not of long duration. The droning flight of the beetle, and the whirring of various kinds of moths that are busy among the foliage of the trees, are the accompaniments of a summer night, suggesting to the fancy the passing of a ghost, and filling the mind with many mysterious conjectures. Sometimes the owl, on his soft silken wings, glides along with stealthy and noiseless flight; and we are soon startled by his peculiar hooting — a sound which I can imagine must be terrific to the smaller inhabitants of the woods.

At midnight, in general, the stillness of the winds is greater than in the daytime, and the gurgling of streams is heard more distinctly amid the general hush of nature. Sounds are now the most prominent objects of attention; and every noise from distant places booms distinctly over the plains and hollows. We are affected with a superstitious feeling, in a lonely place at night, that disposes us to listen with breathless attention to every sound we cannot immediately explain. A morbid sensibility thus awakened is the cause of that pleasure which is felt by most persons under similar circumstances. It leads the youthful and the bold to seek midnight adventure, and the more timid to trust themselves to those ambiguous situations, where, though no danger awaits them, the silence and darkness and mystery produce a state of the mind that borders on ecstasy, and which may be considered the usual mental condition of the religious devotee.

While pursuing our midnight contemplations, occa-

sionally, during an interval of silence, the night-jar, as he flies invisibly over our head,* twangs his wings on a sudden descent through the air in pursuit of his aerial prey, making a sound that to the superstitious, who are unacquainted with the habits of the bird, is fearful and mysterious. The first time I heard this sound, which resembles the snapping of a viol string, was in my school-days, when walking homeward with three of my school-fellows, at midnight, on a solitary turnpike-road. Not knowing the cause of it, we were affected with a peculiar sensation of awe, which was not relieved until daylight revealed to us the birds still circling above our heads.

Often while thus affected with a sensation of mystery bordering on that of sublimity, and in the midst of a stillness that is somewhat awful, all serious emotions will be put to flight, by a sudden chorus of bull-frogs from a neighboring pool. These sounds, in themselves inharmonious, are so suggestive of the sweetness and the quiet of a summer evening in the woods, that they seldom fail to impress the mind with agreeable emotions. In the course of our midnight saunterings, when we are near any collection of water, the shriek of the common green frog is heard incessantly, at short intervals, and the trilling voice of the toad, so continual by day, occasionally breaks the silence of night. The common tree-frog, the prophet of summer showers, which is seldom heard except in damp days, keeps up a constant garrulity, ending only with sunrise, during all still nights in the month of June.

There is no perfect stillness on a summer night.

* This sound is said to be produced by the open mouth of the bird, as he darts swiftly through the air in pursuit of an insect.

There are gentle flutterings of winds that nestle in the foliage; mysterious whisperings of zephyrs and humming of nocturnal insects, that hover around us like spirits, and seem to interrogate us about the reason of our presence at this unseasonable hour. We catch the floatings of distant sounds, mellowed into harmony by the softening effect of distance, hardly to be distinguished from the noise made by a dropping leaf, as it comes rustling down through the small branches. The stirring of a little bird, as he preens his feathers upon a branch just over our heads, and uttering an occasional chirp; a little quadruped leaping suddenly through the underwood, and secreting itself hastily among the herbage, are trifles that add cheerfulness to the solemn quietude of night.

I am supposing the night to be perfectly calm; but how calm soever it may be, now and then a breeze will pass fitfully overhead, and the trees will shake their fluttering leaves in the wind. Perfect stillness will immediately follow, save at intervals a whisper is heard from some unseen object, as if something that had life was watching your motions, or you had obtained a faint perception of sounds from the invisible world.

Among the affecting circumstances attending a night in the woods I must not omit to mention the sounds of distant bells that proclaim the flight of time. These, while they add to the solemnity of our feelings, afford a pleasant assurance of the nearness of human habitations. But the single stroke that tells the hour of midnight, as it tolls over the echoing landscape, repeated at short intervals, from different villages, is peculiarly solemn and impressive. You then feel that you are under the very meridian of night, and that darkness is

your only protection. The effect of this single toll upon the mind at such a time cannot be described.

I have as yet spoken only of sounds, which at midnight are scarcely more impressive than sights. The swarms of little fireflies that are wheeling and darting about in the lowlands are pleasant objects, and are almost the only creatures that can be seen, except perhaps some night bird, as it passes like a dark spot over the half luminous sky. But these little sparks of insect life do not aggravate the impressions made by the darkness. There is nothing about them that excites the imagination, or exalts the feelings. One can easily imagine the terror with which the glaring eyes of the jaguar must be beheld by the midnight traveller in the South American forest. The eyes of the owl, as seen through the deep foliage, might produce similar though inferior impressions; but in our quiet woods imagination is the source of all the terrors that might be felt on witnessing any sudden visions of this bird.

The night would afford no mean employment to the naturalist, if he could but observe the midnight operations of the still wakeful part of animated nature. There are many nocturnal insects which, though not easily discovered in the darkness, are then in motion hovering among the foliage, or seeking the open blossom-cup of some flower of the night. At this time only can the active habits of these creatures be observed, when even the deep shadows do not protect them from the bat, the owl, and the goatsucker, who nightly destroy thousands of these beautiful insects, leaving their torn wings and elegant plumage in the green forest path, or lodged upon a leafy branch, and marking the place of their destruction.

As real objects are but faintly seen, by the same cause the phantoms of darkness are made visible. There are many things in the obscurity that assume dubious and mysterious shapes, and excite the curiosity blended with some apprehension. The branches are pictured like the forms of birds and quadrupeds on the sky, and every passing breeze seems to wake them into life and motion. A beam of light appears on the plain, or a shadow on the hill, reminding you of the dusky form of a ghost, as it glides half visibly among the indistinct forms of the trees. On a dark night almost all objects are ambiguous. The trees that stand near the borders of streams cast faint shadows upon them, that are often mistaken for some real and indefinable objects resting upon their starry surface. Every thing that moves reminds you of a spirit; and many are the unintelligible forms that stand around, nodding their heads, and, as it were, beckoning to some kindred monster. You feel as if they were aware of your presence, and were consulting together how they should regard your intrusion into their dusky haunts. At such times the creaking of a dry branch of a tree, when swayed by the wind, will startle you, like the sudden and unexpected approach of a person behind you.

As night draws near its close, we begin to long for the morn; and the crowing of cocks from some neighboring farm yard affords a pleasant relief to our weariness, and an assurance of the nearness of dawn. The little hair-bird, that utters his trilling note at intervals throughout the night, is heard more frequently. At length an occasional twitter from the birds, that everywhere surround us, announces that morning is visible. Nature always gives signs of an approaching change; and morning dawn and evening twilight have their re-

spective harbingers, and she usually accompanies them with peculiar harmonies from the elements and from animated things. Thus, by the croaking of the tree-toad, she announces an approaching shower; by the chirping of the green nocturnal grasshopper, she proclaims the decline of summer; but the feathered tribes are nature's favorite sentinels, whom she employs to herald in the morn.

If we now take our stand on an eminence, where we can obtain a clear view of the eastern belt of the horizon, a luminous appearance may be observed, forming a semi-circle of dim whitish light around the gate of morning. If a thin veil of clouds overspread the arch, the tints will be dark in proportion to their distances from the hidden source of light. Imagine it divided into circles; —the inner one will be of a light yellow; the next assumes a tint of gold; beyond that is orange, and as it extends outwards, it passes through regular gradations of vermilion, crimson, purple, and violet, until it melts into the azure of the firmament.

XXI.

MORNING IN SUMMER.



NATURE, for the delight of waking eyes, has arrayed the morning heavens in the loveliest hues of beauty. Fearing to dazzle by an excess of light, she first announces day by a faint and glimmering twilight, then sheds a purple tint over the brows of the rising morn, and infuses a transparent ruddiness throughout the whole atmosphere. As daylight widens, successive groups of mottled and rosy-bosomed clouds assemble on the gilded sphere, and, crowned with wreaths of fickle rainbows, spread a mirrored flush over hill, grove, and lake, and every village spire is burnished with their splendor. At length through crimsoned vapors we behold the sun's broad disc, rising with a countenance so serene, that every eye may view him, ere he arrays himself in his meridian brightness. Not many people who live in towns are aware of the pleasure attending a ramble near the woods and orchards at daybreak in the early part of summer. The drowsiness we feel on rising from our beds is gradually dispelled by the clear and healthful breezes of early day, and we soon experience an unusual amount of vigor and elasticity. Nature has so ordered her bounties and her blessings, as to

cause the hour which is consecrated to health to be attended with the greatest amount of charms for all the senses; and to make all hearts enamoured of the morning, she has environed it with every thing in heaven and on earth, that is charming to the eye or to the ear, or capable of inspiring some agreeable sentiment.

During the night the stillness of all things is the circumstance that most powerfully attracts our notice, rendering one peculiarly sensitive to every accidental sound that meets the ear. In the morning, on the contrary, at this time of year, we are overwhelmed by the vocal and multitudinous chorus of the feathered tribe. If you would hear the commencement of this grand anthem of nature, you must rise on the very first appearance of dawn, before the twilight has formed a complete circle above the eastern porch of heaven. The first note that proceeds from the little warbling host is the shrill chirp of the hair-bird, which is occasionally heard at all hours, on a warm summer night. This strain, which is a continued trilling sound, is repeated with diminishing intervals, until it becomes almost incessant. But the hair-bird has not uttered many notes before a single robin begins to warble from a neighboring orchard, being soon followed by others, increasing in numbers, until, by the time the eastern sky has attained a crimson hue, every male robin in the country round is singing with fervor.

It would be difficult to note the exact order in which the different birds successively commence their parts in this performance; but the bluebird, whose song is only a short mellow warble, is heard nearly at the same time with the robin, and the song-sparrow joins them soon after with his brief, but finely modulated strain.

The different species follow rapidly, one after another, in the chorus, until the whole welkin rings with their matin hymn of gladness. I have often wondered that the almost simultaneous utterance of so many different notes should produce no discords, and that they should result in such complete harmony. In this multitudinous confusion of voices, no two notes are confounded, and none has sufficient duration to grate harshly with a dissimilar sound. Though each performer sings only a few strains and then makes a pause, the whole multitude succeed each other with such rapidity that we hear an uninterrupted flow of music, until the broad light of day invites them to other employments.

Before the birds can see well enough to fly, you may observe, here and there, a single swallow perched on the roof of a barn or shed, repeating two twittering notes incessantly, with a quick turn and a hop at every note he utters. It would seem to be the design of the bird to attract the attention of his mate, and this motion seems to be made to assist her in discovering his position. As soon as there is sufficient light to enable them to fly, this twittering strain is uttered more like a continued song, as they flit rapidly through the air. But at this later moment the martins have commenced their more melodious chattering, so loudly as to attract for a while the most of our attention. There is not a sound in nature so cheering and animating as the voice of the purple martin, and none so well calculated to drive away melancholy. Though not one of the earliest voices to be heard, the chorus is perceptibly more loud and effective when this bird has united with the choir.

When the flush of morning has brightened into vermillion, and the place from which the sun is soon to

emerge has attained a dazzling brilliancy, the robins are already less tuneful. They are now becoming busy in collecting food for their morning repast, and one by one they leave the trees, and may be seen hopping upon the tilled ground, in quest of the worms and insects that have crept out during the night from their subterranean retreats. But as the voice of the robins has ceased, the bobolinks commence their vocal revelries; and to a fanciful mind it might seem that the robins had gradually resigned their part in the performance to the bobolinks, not one of which commences until some of the former have concluded their songs. The little hair-bird still continues his almost incessant chirping, the first to commence and the last to quit the performance. Though the voice of this bird is not very agreeably modulated, it blends harmoniously with the notes of other birds, and greatly increases the charming effect of the whole combination.

It would be tedious to name all the birds that take part in this chorus, but we must not omit the pewee, with his melancholy ditty, occasionally heard like a short minor strain in an oratorio; nor the oriole, who is really one of the chief performers, and who, as his bright plumage flashes upon the sight, warbles forth a few notes so clear and mellow, as to be heard above every other sound. Adding a pleasing variety to all this harmony, the three notes of the meadow lark, uttered in a shrill tone, and with a peculiarly pensive modulation, are plainly audible, with short rests between each repetition. But he does not soar into the skies like the European lark, and is not generally regarded as one of our singing birds.

There is a little brown sparrow, resembling the hair-bird, save that his plumage has a general tint of russet,

that may be heard distinctly among the warbling host. He is never found in cultivated grounds, but frequents the wild pastures, and is the bird that warbles so sweetly at midsummer, when the whortleberries are ripe, and the fields are beautifully spangled with red lilies. There is no confusion in the notes of his song, which consists of one syllable rapidly repeated, but increasing in rapidity, and rising to a higher key towards the conclusion. He sometimes prolongs his strain, when his notes are observed to rise and fall in succession. These plaintive and expressive notes are very loud and constantly repeated, during the whole hour that precedes the rising of the sun. A dozen warblers of this species, singing in concert, and distributed in different parts of the field, form perhaps the most delightful part of the woodland oratorio to which we have yet listened.

As the woods are the residence of a tribe of musicians that differ from those we hear in the open fields and orchards, one must spend a morning in each of these situations, to obtain a hearing of all the songsters of daybreak. For this reason I have said nothing of the thrushes, that sing chiefly in the woods and solitary pastures, and are commonly more musical in the early evening than in the morning. I have confined my remarks chiefly to those birds that frequent the orchards and gardens, and dwell familiarly near the habitations of men.

At sunrise, hardly a robin is to be heard in the whole neighborhood, and the character of the performance has completely changed during the last half hour. The first part was more melodious and tranquillizing, the last more brilliant and animating. The grassfinches, the vireos, the wrens, and the linnets have joined their voices to the chorus, and the bobolinks are loudest in

their song. But the notes of birds in general are not so incessant as they were before sunrise. One by one they discontinue their lays, until at high noon the bobolink and the warbling flycatcher are almost the only vocalists to be heard in the fields.

Among the agreeable accompaniments of a summer morning walk are the odors from the woods, the herbage, and the flowers. At no other hour of the day is the atmosphere so fragrant with their emanations. The blossoms of almost every species of plant are just unfolding their petals, after the sleep of night, and their various offerings of incense are now poured out at the ruddy shrine of morning. The objects of sight and sound are generally the most expressive in a description of nature, because seeing and hearing are the intellectual senses. But the perfumes that abound in different situations are hardly less suggestive than sights and sounds. Let a person who has always been familiar with green fields and babbling brooks, and who has suddenly become blind, be led out under the open sky, and how would the various perfumes from vegetation suggest to him all the individual scenes and objects which have been imprinted on his memory!

There is a peculiar feeling of hope and cheerfulness that comes to us on a summer morning walk, and sends its happy influence over all the rest of the day. The pleasant stillness, apart from the stirring population; the amber glow of heaven that beams from underneath successive arches of crimson and vermilion, constantly widening and brightening into the full glory of sunrise; the consciousness of having gained an hour of the time usually devoted to sleep; above all, the melodious concert of warblers from every bush and tree, constantly changing its character by the silence of the first per-

formers and the joining of new voices — all conspire to render the brief period from dawn to sunrise a consecrated hour, and to sanctify it to every one's memory. I am inclined to attribute the healthfulness of early rising to these circumstances, rather than to the doubtful salubrity of the dewy atmosphere of morn. The exercise of the senses while watching the beautiful gradations of colors, through which the rising luminary passes ere his full form appears in sight, is attended with emotions like those which might be supposed to attend us at the actual opening of the gates of Paradise. We return home, after this ramble, with a heart warmed by new love for the beautiful objects of nature, and with all our feelings so harmonized by the sweet influences of morn, as to find increased delight in the performance of our duties and the exercise of our affections.

XXII.

J U L Y .



THE month of temperate breezes and interminable verdure, has given place to a season of parching heat and sunshine, which has seared the verdant brows of the hills, and driven away the vernal flowers that crowned their summits. They have all fled from the uplands to escape the heat and drought, and have sought shelter in wet places or under the damp shade of woods. Many of the rivulets that gave animation to the prospect in the spring, are now marked only by a narrow channel, filled with a luxuriant growth of herbs, that follow its winding course along the plain; and the shallow pools that watered the early cowslips, are transformed into meads of waving herbage. Millions of bright flowers are nodding their heads over the tall grass; but we scarcely heed them; for they seem like the haughty usurpers of the rightful dominion of the meeker flowers of spring. The cattle have taken shelter under the canopy of trees, to escape from the hot beams of the sun, and many of them may be seen standing in the pools and the margins of ponds, for refreshment and protection from insects. All animated

nature is indulging a languid repose, faint and exhausted with the sultry heats of July.

As June was peculiarly the month of music and flowers, July is the harvest month of the early fruits; and though the man of feeling would prefer the last month, the present certainly offers the most attractions to the epicure. Strawberries are in their ripest abundance, and fill the air with fragrance even more delicious than their fruit. While these are becoming scarce, the raspberry bushes that embroider the walls and fences, hang out their ripe red clusters of berries, where the wild rose and the elder flower scent the air with their healthful fragrance. The rocks and precipices, so lately crowned with the early flowers, are beautifully festooned with thimbleberries, that spring out in tufts from their mossy crevices, half covered with green umbrageous ferns. Ripe fruits hang in abundance from the brambles that creep over the green hill-sides, like so many garlands of beads around the bosom of nature, and there is no spot so barren, that it is not covered with something that is beautiful to the sight, or grateful to the sense. The little bell-flowers, that hung in profusion from the low blueberry bushes, whose beauty and fragrance we so lately admired, are transformed into azure fruits, that rival the flowers in elegance. Nature seems to be inviting all her children to partake of the pleasures of sense, and would convert us all into epicures, by changing into delicious fruits, those beautiful things we contemplated, so lately, with a tender sentiment, allied to that of love. Summer is surely the season of epicurism, as spring is that of a more refined and spiritual enjoyment. Nature has now bountifully provided for every sense. The trees that afford a pleasant shade, are surrounded with an undergrowth of fruit-

ful shrubs, and the winds that fan the brows, come laden with odors which they have gathered from beds of roses, sweetbriers, and fragrant viburnums. Goldfinches and humming-birds peep down upon us, as they are flitting among the green branches of the trees, and gilded butterflies settle upon the flowers at our feet, and charm our eyes by the union of life and beauty. In the pastures, that are sparkling with an abundant produce of wild fruits, the red lilies and downy spiraea appear in glowing profusion; and young children who go out into the fields to gather these simple luxuries, after having filled their baskets with fruit, crown their arms with bouquets of lilies, laurels, and honeysuckles, rejoicing over their bounty, during the happiest, inasmuch as it is the most simple and natural period of their lives.

The glory of our woods and pastures, at this season, is the mountain-laurel, (*kalmia latifolia*,) one of the most magnificent flowering shrubs of any climate. It is preceded by a more humble plant of the same tribe, — the low laurel, or lambkill, bearing whorls of bright crimson flowers, bound like a wreath around the stem, beneath a tuft of green leaves that terminate the branch. It grows in open pastures, and in favorable situations attains an almost unrivalled beauty. The flowers of the mountain-laurel are equally beautiful at a distance, and upon minute examination, combining, in the highest degree, those qualities so seldom united, splendor and delicacy. These brilliant flowers young people have always delighted to blend with trailing evergreens, in the decoration of halls for their July festivities, and being truly an American species, they deserve more than any other plant to represent in America, the celebrated bay-laurel of the Romans.

There is no more agreeable recreation, at this season, than a water-excursion upon a wood-skirted pond, when its alluvial borders are brightly spangled with water-lilies, and the air is full of delicate incense, from their sweet-scented double flowers. The pewit may be seen gliding, with nimble feet, upon the broad leaves that float upon the surface of the waters, so lightly as hardly to impress a dimple on the glossy sheen; and multitudes of fishes are gambolling among their long stems, in the clear depths below. Among the fragrant white lilies are interspersed the more curious, though less delicate flowers of the yellow lily; and in clusters, here and there upon the shore, where the turf is dank and tremulous, the purple sarracénias bow their heads over lands that never felt a plough. The alders and birches cast a beautiful shade upon the mirrored surface of the borders of the lake, the birds are singing melodiously among the bushes, and clusters of ripe raspberries overhang the banks within our reach, as we sail along their shelvy sides.

But we listen in vain in our rural excursions, at this time, for the songs of multitudes of birds that were so tuneful a few weeks since. The chattering bobolink, merriest bird of June, has become silent; and he will soon doff his black coat and yellow epaulettes, and put on the russet garb of winter. His voice is heard no more in concert with the general anthem of nature; he has become silent with all his merry kindred; and instead of the lively notes, poured out so merrily for the space of two months, we hear only a plaintive chirping, as the birds wander about the fields in scattered parties, no longer employed in the cares of wedded life. From cheerful songsters, apparently devoted to the entertainment of others, they are metamorphosed into selfish

beings, employed only in providing for their own physical wants. But there are several of our most melodious warblers that still remain tuneful. The little wood-sparrow sings more loudly and with a more varied strain than ever; the vireos and wrens still enliven the village gardens, with their almost unceasing lays, and the hermit-thrush, from his deep sylvan retreats, still utters his liquid strains, in the reverberating solitudes of the woods.

In the place of the birds, myriads of chirping insects have sprung into life, and pour forth, during the heat of the day, a continual din of merry voices. Day by day are they stringing their harps anew, and leading out a fresh host of musicians, and making ready to gladden the days of autumn with the fulness of their songs. At intervals, during the hottest of weather, we hear the peculiar spinning note of the harvest fly, a species of locust, beginning low, and with a gradual swell, increasing in loudness for a few seconds, and then slowly dying away into silence. These sounds are vividly associated in my mind, with the pleasures and languishments of a summer noonday; of cool shades apart from sultry heats; of soft repose beneath the embowering canopies of willows, or grateful repasts of fruit in the summer orchard. There are likewise many sounds in themselves disagreeable, which are relatively pleasing. The hoarse unmusical note of the bull-frog, while we are sauntering about the streams and lowlands, on a sultry afternoon, produces an agreeable effect upon the mind, by pleasing suggestions of soft breezes, still waters, twilight scenery, and all the sweet accompaniments of a summer evening.

The season of haymaking has arrived; the mowers are already busy in their occupation; and the whetting

of the scythe blends harmoniously with the pleasant rural sounds of animated nature. The air is filled with the fragrance of new mown hay — the dying incense-offering of the troops of flowers that perish beneath the fatal scythe. Many are the delightful remembrances to those who have spent their youth in the country, connected with the labors of haymaking. In moderate summer weather, there is no more delightful occupation. Every toil is pleasant that leads us out into green fields, and serves to fill the mind with the cheerfulness of all living things. But this employment, so agreeable to one who makes it only the amusement of a few leisure hours on a pleasant day, becomes, at certain times, a very laborious toil.

Often in the middle of a clear sunny afternoon, the western horizon is suddenly mantled with dark clouds rising rapidly, that threaten to spoil all the last day's labor of the haymakers. Then all hands are summoned, and there is a general scrambling to gather the hay into stacks or to load it into barns. The rumbling thunder at a distance, is constantly rousing them from every relaxation of their efforts, and ere they have completed their task, the scarce and heavy drops warn them to seek shelter within doors. Immediately the rain descends in torrents, and the whole atmosphere is enveloped in darkness, that renders more glaring the frequent vivid flashes, that precede the awful voice of heaven.

Soon, when the sun comes forth, as in a new morning, from behind his late pavilion of clouds and darkness, the rainbow appears in the opposite firmament, and the whole landscape smiles beneath its variegated beams. The birds fly out from their shelters, and rejoicing in the reappearance of the sun, and the renova-

tion of exhausted nature, they sing more gayly than at any other period; and the stillness and dampness of the air causes their notes to resound clearly through the groves, now sparkling with the mingled rain drops and sunshine. Every herb, tree, and flower, sends forth a fresh offering of incense; and as the sun declines, the clouds that gather about his throne, receive from him a tribute of all the varied tints of the rainbow, and illuminate the western hemisphere with a wreath of infinitely variegated and constantly changeable splendor.

But summer, with all its delightful occasions of joy and rejoicing, is in one respect the most melancholy season of the year. We are now the constant witnesses of some regretful change in the aspect of nature, reminding us of the fate of all things, and the transitoriness of existence. Every morning sun looks down upon the graves of some whole tribes of flowers, that were but yesterday the pride and glory of the fields, and the admiration of the impassioned beholder. Every time I pursue my walks, while rejoicing at the discovery of some new and beautiful visitant of the flowery meads, I am suddenly affected with sorrow, upon looking around in vain for some little companion of my latest excursion, now drooping and faded, and breathing out its last breath of fragrance into the air.

I am then reminded of early friends who are constantly leaving us for another state; who are cut down one by one like the flowers, and leave their places to be supplied by new friends, perhaps equally lovely and worthy of our affections, but whose even greater loveliness and worth, can never comfort us for the loss of those who have departed. Like flowers they smile upon us for a brief season, and like flowers they perish,

after remaining with us but to teach us how to love and how to mourn. The birds likewise sojourn with us only long enough to teach us the joy of their presence, and to afford us an occasion of sorrow, when they leave our vicinity. We have hardly grown familiar with their songs, ere they become silent and prepare for their annual migration. They are like those agreeable companions among our friends, who are ever roaming about the world, on errands of business, duty, or pleasure, and who only divide with us that pleasing intercourse which they share with other friendly circles in different parts of the earth.

It is midsummer; already do we perceive the lengthening of the nights, and the shortening of the earth's diurnal orbit. We are reminded by the first observation of this change, that the summer is rapidly passing away; and we think upon it with a peculiarly realizing sense of the mutability of the seasons. But let us not lament that nature has ordained these alternations; for though there is no change that does not bring with it some lingering sorrows over the past, — yet may it not be that these vicissitudes are the real sources of that happiness, which we ignorantly attribute to another cause? Every month, while it sadly reminds us of the departed pleasures and beauties of the last, brings with it a recompense in bounties and blessings, which the last month could not afford. While rejoicing, therefore, amid the voluptuous delights of summer, let us not lament that we are not destined to live for ever among enervating luxuries! With the aid of temperance and virtue, all seasons as they come, may be made equally a source of enjoyment. And may it not be, that life itself is but a season in the revolving year of eternity — the vernal season of our immortality — that

leads not round and round, in a circle ; but onward in an everlasting progression, from imperfect virtue and imperfect happiness, to greater goodness and greater bliss, until the virtues we now cherish have ripened into eternal felicity !

XXIII.

THE SEA-SHORE.

By the solitary sea-shore, near the dashing of waves, that for thousands of ages have ebbed and flowed in a never tiring alternation, I stand, and yield my mind to those sombre thoughts suggested by the scenes about me. The rocks that bound the coast, and form a bulwark for the land against the raging of the tempest and the surging of the billows, stand around in naked desolation, sublime in their strength to resist the contending elements, and beautiful as they reflect the rays of the sun that gilds them when he rises above the green-headed waves. The promontories, that extend into the sea, call dismally to mind, the many disasters they have witnessed, while contending against the assaults of the ocean, and the anger of the winds; and the echoes, that haunt their solitary rocks, seem to repeat many a tale of sorrow and misfortune.

The sea-gulls are sailing above my head, uttering their trilling scream, and congregating restlessly in flocks upon the distant shallows. Clad in their downy plumage, they are alike impenetrable by summer's heat or winter's cold. They are merry and busy alike at all seasons and in all weather; and are never weary of

rising and sinking, as if life was to them only a scene of moving and busy preparation for something to come. Now and then the halcyon, or kingfisher, with a note that resembles a watchman's rattle, may be seen standing on a leafless branch of a tree, that extends over the wave, silently watching for his prey. His home is among the rocks of the shore, and he has learned his discordant notes from the raging billows, with which he loves to contend. He delights in the sound of the waters; and has borrowed the hues of his plumage from the azure that overspreads the surface of the great deep.

There is an aspect of desolation about the sea-shore that harmonizes with the plaintive sounds that are always blended with the murmuring waves; but nature has strewed it with thousands of beautiful things, from the huge rock that defends the shore, to the minutest shells that are scattered at our feet. Sea-mosses, of the most variegated colors and forms, have been washed upon the sands; and pebbles of white and red quartz and green and yellow feldspar, have been ground to perfect smoothness by the washings of centuries. Millions of curiously wrought sea-shells, of different species, are strewed among the red, yellow, purple, and white gravel. Every spot is filled with microscopic wonders, and many are the fragments that tell of the mysterious productions, that luxuriate in the depths of the sea.

The banks of earth, that gird a part of the shore, have been so often assailed by storms, that but little vegetation covers their sloping sides. But flowers of rare beauty may be found clustering there, where nature has planted many a species that refuses to grow far from the briny spray of the ocean. Lupines, with their erect spikes of blue and lilac, are conspicuous in their sea-

son ; and a few days later, the maritime peavine covers roods of sand with its dense green leaves, interspersed with tufts of purple flowers, that seem to peep out timidly from under the foliage. Of more humble appearance, we observe the sea-sandwort, and the scarlet pimpernel, or poor man's weather-glass, that expands in the broad sunshine, but closes when the sky is overcast with clouds, or the wind blows freshly from the sea. Many tall grasses are nodding their brown and purple plumes on the edge of the shore ; and as if to rival the beauty of the meadows, the marsh rosemary gleams among the herbage, like some fair blossoms that have wandered from a brighter clime. The purple gerardia does not refuse to grow by the seaside, and often blends its delicate cups with the green and crimson samphire. The shores abound with many other plants conspicuous only for their peculiarities. Such are the prickly salt-wort, and the goose-foot and the sea-lovage that are frequent by the seaside, and are familiarly associated in our minds with its sands and its pebbles.

There is a mixture of beauty, grandeur, and desolation in the objects about the sea-shore, that renders it peculiarly interesting to every man of lively fancy. Hence it has ever been the theme of the poet, from him who portrays Chryses, the priest and bereaved parent wandering silent and sorrowful by the sounding main, regarding the sea-shore as a proper scene for a disconsolate father's grief, to the modern lyrist who apostrophizes the open sea. And hence the sea and its accompaniments have ever been the haunt of beings of the imagination. From every rock has been heard the sweet voice of the Siren ; and Nereids, in the semblance of beautiful nymphs, reside in palaces of amber, far down in the fathomless deep. Among the cliffs and

caverns of the shore, and in the dark mysterious abysses of the ocean itself, has fancy always delighted to picture the residences of supernatural beings, — some of whom are appointed to guard the seaman, in his perilous course ; while others, inhabiting some green summer isle, are employed in tempting the voyager to turn aside from his destination, to seek dangerous pleasures among its fruitful fields.

The sublimity of the ocean, whether we behold it from the shore, or from midwaters, has always been the delight of those who take pleasure in lofty conceptions. Here is the boundless expanse of the ocean on one side, allied with our ideas of infinity, and awaking sentiments of grandeur and melancholy ; and on the other, green banks adorned with groves and shrubbery, and fringed with thousands of plants peculiar to the situation. Scenes of beauty and pastoral delight, being thus placed in opposition to this wide waste of waters, affect with a double charm both the eye and the mind. The sea-shore is a spot that has ever been sacred to musing. The contemplative man finds in its solitude a pleasant companionship with the whispering wave, and with the echoes that have ever dwelt in its clefts and dingles. The dashing of waves has a deep solemnity of expression, unlike any other sound in nature, as they come with a loud weltering upon the strand, and then slide back, with a diminishing sound, and a thousand rippling notes among the pebbles. After being disturbed by a tempest, the ocean seems to convey in its sullen roar, a dim suggestion of the perils of the deep, and of the sufferings of those who have encountered shipwreck upon its merciless bosom.

In connection with these sights and sounds, certain fancies will come to the mind while musing by the sea-

side, that add a tender melancholy to our reflections, and cause every scene, however barren, to stand out to the mental vision as a picture, embellished with beautiful and pathetic images, drawn from romance and real life. Thus do the sombre shades of evening, when blended with the light of day, produce those gorgeous but melancholy tints, that surround the sun at his decline. Some of the most pleasing myths and traditions are connected with the isles, promontories, and inlets of the sea. All these affect the mind, however unconsciously, with a feeling of sadness and sublimity, while we survey the broken scenery of the coast, and listen to the significant muttering of the waves, when they threaten a storm, or to their lonely surging, after the tempest is over.

Often on a still evening, when the perplexities of business and study have fevered the mind, or misfortune has depressed the spirits, have I taken a solitary ramble by the seaside. All that is lively does not on all occasions enliven; neither does all that is solemn and melancholy always tend to sadden the feelings. The mind, when it needs consolation, craves something that is in harmony with its afflictions; and nothing to the stricken soul is so saddening as the loud laughter of vacant hilarity. But the plaintive music of the whispering wave, or the solemn intonations of the muttering billows, when they dash with frequency upon the rock-bound coast, are not depressing. Though in harmony with the soul in its melancholy moods, they raise the drooping spirits to an alliance with the grander scenes of nature, and cheer them by this exaltation.

The Osprey, as he sails above my head, in many a circular sweep, utters a scream that is in unison with the lonely music of the sea; and as the day declines and

the shades of night are gathering about me, the whistle of the plover far aloft in the heavens, comes to the ear like the voice of some invisible being with a message from another land. The birds of the sea-shore have no song. Nature, who creates nothing in vain, has refrained from giving them musical notes, that would be lost among the discordant sounds which the echoes often strive vainly to repeat, in the deafening confusion of their roar. But the notes of these birds are not all wanting in cheerfulness. The twittering of the little sandpipers, that gather about the flats at low tide, is as lively as their motions, and attracts the ear almost as with music, while we watch their peculiarly graceful flight.

The sea-shore presents many scenes that are favorable to meditation; and the voices of the waves seem to have borrowed a pensive tone from the disasters they have witnessed, when the tempest has driven upon the rocks, and mercilessly dashed to pieces the vessel that struggled against their power. Not the least interesting objects of the sea-shore are those which are borrowed from art, and made charming by their connection with the welfare of man. A little skiff contending with a rising gale, and just near enough to the shore, to afford an assurance that she will land in safety; a fleet of joyful sail making headway out to sea, under a gentle breeze, with the beams of the morning sun gilding their canvas, and rendering them the more conspicuous, on the blue surface of the deep, are objects ever exciting to the sympathies and interesting to the mind.

Ye charming scenes of grandeur; ye naked rocks that have battled for thousands of ages with the tempest; ye murmuring billows that charm our ears with the very music of melancholy; ye flowery banks which

have always been the resort of the sand-martin and the little piping plover;—in vain would I attempt to describe the sentiments of mingled sadness, cheerfulness, and sublimity, awakened by the varied objects that surround the great abyss of waters. When sadness comes upon the mind, like a dark cloud over the vernal sunshine, let me stroll by the seaside, and find a tonic for the drooping spirits, in those sounds that have, for countless centuries, spoken in the ears of man the power and the wisdom of their Creator! Let him who is of thoughtless habit come here and ponder, until he has learned that from these solitary musings, comes a purer and more enduring pleasure, than from all the frivolities of high life. For here by the sea-shore nature shows forth the wonders of creation, along with beauties and harmonies, that fill the soul with gratitude and delight, and yield to him who wanders there, with a devout spirit, a gladness that can spring only from nature, and hopes that descend only from the skies.

XXIV.

AUGUST.



THE plains and uplands are already green with a second growth of vegetation. A new spring has commenced among the tender herbs, and nature is rapidly repairing the devastation committed by the scythe of the mower. But the work of the haymaker is not completed. He is still swinging his scythe among the tall sedge-grass in the lowlands; and the ill-fated flowers of August may be seen lying upon the green-sward, among the prostrate herbage. The fields of grain are bright with their golden maturity; the work of the reapers has commenced, and the sheaves of wheat and rye, present to sight their waving rows to gladden and to bless the husbandman. Flocks of quails, reared since the decay of the spring flowers, are diligent among the fields, after the reapers have left their tasks. They may be seen slyly and silently creeping along the ground; and now and then they lift up their timid heads, as they are watching our approach. The loud whistling of the guardian of the flock, perched at a short distance upon a wall, may also be heard; and occasionally, as we saunter carelessly along the field-path, a brood of partridges, rising suddenly, almost from

under our feet, astound our ears with their loud whirring flight.

Since the fading of the roses, the greater numbers of the summer warblers have become silent, as if the presence of these lovely flowers was necessary to inspire them with song. They have grown timid, and have forsaken their usual habits; no longer warbling at the season's feast or rejoicing in the noonday of love. They fly no longer in pairs, but assemble in flocks, which may be seen rising and settling, at frequent intervals, over different parts of the landscape. Some species are irregularly scattered, while others gather themselves into large multitudinous flocks, and seem to be enjoying a long holiday of social festivities, while preparing to leave these northern latitudes. Their songs, lasting only during the period of love, are discontinued since their conjugal joys have ended, and the young birds are no longer under their care. On every new excursion into the woods, I perceive the sudden absence of some important melodist of the woodland choir. During the interval between midsummer and early autumn, one voice after another drops away, until the little song-sparrow is left again, to warble alone in the fields and gardens, where he sung his earliest hymn of rejoicing over the departure of winter.

Since the birds have become silent, they have lost their pleasant familiarity with man, and have acquired an unwonted shyness. The little warblers that were wont to sing on the boughs, just over our heads, or at a short distance from our path, now keep at a timid distance, chirping with a complaining voice, and flee from our approach, before we are near enough to observe their altered plumage. The plovers and the pewits have come forth from the places where they reared their

young, and congregate in large flocks upon the marshes; and as we stroll along the sea-shore, we are often agreeably startled by the sudden twittering flight of these graceful birds, aroused from their haunts by our unexpected intrusion. Now and then in our sauntering tour, our ears are greeted by the harsh voice of the king-fisher, as he sits motionless upon a branch that juts over the tide, watching his finny prey; and the stakedriver, a species of heron, is roused from his retreat, and with that peculiar note from which he has derived his name, pursues his awkward flight into the neighboring swamp.

The lowland valleys, during the early part of this month, are covered with their proudest luxuriance. The red fimbriated orchis rears its elegant plumes above the paler flowers of the arethusa; the scarlet lobelia gleams like some flower of a brighter clime, around the borders of the rivulets; and the orange-colored heads of the butterfly-weed, and the purple blossoms of the Indian hemp, meet our sight, at almost every turn in our wanderings. Long rows of the trumpet-weed border the drains and brook-sides, looking proudly over the humble osier-bushes, and the purple blossoms that terminate their tall perpendicular stalks, may be seen nodding in the breeze like the plumes of a marching company of infantry. Sometimes when rambling in deep woods, which have never been reduced by the hand of cultivation, in certain choice and secluded places — the cloisters of the wilderness — the white orchis may occasionally be discovered, each flower bearing resemblance to a delicate female with a white ruff and turban. The plant is almost parasitic, having its roots imbedded in the peat mosses, and not extending into the soil. When we meet these little flowers of

the purest whiteness, looking timidly out from their bower of ferns, hedged around by tall reeds, and protected by a canopy of alders, they seem the apt emblems of innocence and vestal purity.

It is now almost impossible for the rambler to penetrate some of his old accustomed paths in the lowlands, so thickly are they interwoven with vines and trailing herbs. Several species of cleavers, with their slender prickly branches, form a close network among the rushes and ferns; and the smilax and the blackberry vines weave an almost impenetrable thicket in our ancient pathway. The walls are festooned with the blue flowers of the woody nightshade, and the more graceful plants of the peavine and groundnut are twining among the faded flowers of elders and viburnums. The bending panicles of the blue vervain are nodding above the yellow flowers of the tufted loosestrife, and the purple downy spiræa decks the borders of the fields with its numerous pyramidal clusters. The lowlands were never more delightful than at the present time; and they afford one many a refreshing arbor beneath the shrubbery, where the waters have dried away, and left the green grass plat as sweetly scented as a bower of honeysuckles. These are places that seem designed for our refreshment on summer noondays: bowers where it is delightful to repose beneath the shade of the slender birches whose tremulous foliage seems to be whispering to us some pleasant messages of peace. All around us the convolvulus has woven its delicate vines, and hung out its pink and striped bellflowers; and the clematis, or virgin's bower, has formed an umbrageous trellis-work over the tops of the trees. Its white clustering blossoms spread themselves out in triumph over the clambering grape vines; and wood-

bines and other trailing shrubs are interwoven with the slender branches of the trees, forming deep shades which the sun cannot penetrate, overhanging and over-arching the green paths that lead through the lowland thickets.

But let the Rambler in the wooded swamps beware of that upas of our forests—the poison sumach. It is one of the most elegant of our native shrubs; and its long, slender, and graceful branches, terminating with pinnate leaves on purple glossy stems, invite the unwary Rambler to pluck them from the tree, to add to his bouquet of wild flowers. Hardly less dangerous is the poison ivy—a plant of the same genus—of a trailing habit, almost parasitic, and frequenting all kinds of situations. It is often mistaken for the Virginia creeper, a very harmless and ornamental vine; and may be distinguished from it by observing that it has its leaves in threes, while the creeper bears them in whorls of fives. The dread of these plants destroys the pleasure which many persons would otherwise derive from a rural excursion; but prudence and a knowledge of their aspect are a sufficient safeguard from injury. Though I have never been in the slightest degree affected by them, yet whenever I meet them I turn aside, and have often left untouched a beautiful flower, or a cluster of ripe fruit, which could be obtained only by passing through a coppice of poison wood.

The odors that scent the atmosphere, during the several months of the year, are as different as their vegetation and climate; and these odors, to one who is accustomed to them, are immediately suggestive of the general aspect of the season. At the present time, mingled with the perfume of flowers, comes the less fragrant incense from the sheaves of the reapers; and

there is an agreeable and peculiar odor rising from the wet lands, which is characteristic of the month. Early in the spring, when the mellow soil first receives the warm rays of the sun, we perceive a healthful incense from the newly springing herbs. This is soon succeeded by the fragrance of the early flowers, and of the tasselled trees and shrubs. Day by day new hosts of flowers arrive in succession, until the air is full of the spicy aroma of early summer. With August commences the decline of these delicious gifts of vegetation; and the scents of autumn and of the harvest become daily more abundant, until the arrival of the frosts, that fill the atmosphere with those peculiar odors that mark the fall of the leaf. .

When the pale orchis of the meads is dead, and the red lily stands divested of its crown; when the arethusa no longer bends her head over the stream, and the last roses are weeping incense over the faded remnants of their lovely tribe — then I know that the glory of summer has departed; and I look not, until the coming of the asters and the goldenrods, to see the fields again robed in loveliness and beauty. The meeker flowers have perished, since the singing birds have discontinued their songs, and the last rose of summer may be seen, blooming upon its stem, in solitary and melancholy beauty — the lively emblem of the sure decline of the beautiful objects of this life; the lovely symbol of beauty's frailty and its transientness. When the last rose is gone, I look around with sadness upon its late familiar haunts; I feel that summer's beauty now is past, and sad mementos rise wherever I tread.

It is my delight to seek for these last born of the tribe of roses; and they seem to my sight more beauti-

ful than any that preceded them, as if nature, like a partial mother, had lavished her best gifts upon these, her youngest children. The bushes that support them are overtopped by other plants, that seem to feel an envious delight in concealing them from observation; but they cannot blot them from our memory, nor be admired as we admire them. The clethra, with its white odoriferous flowers, and the button-bush, with its elegant globular heads, vainly strive to equal them in fragrance or beauty. The proud and scornful thistle rears its head close by their side, and seems to mock at the fragility of these lovely flowers; but the wild-brier, though its roses have faded, still gives out its undying perfume, as if the essence of the withered flowers still lingered about their leafy habitation, like the spirits of our departed friends, about the places they loved in their lifetime.

In the latter part of the month, we begin to mark the approaching footsteps of autumn. Twilight is chill; and we perceive the greater length of the nights, and evening's earlier dew. The morning sun is later in the heavens, and sooner tints the fleecy clouds of evening. The bright verdure of the trees has faded to a more dusky green; and here and there in different parts of the woods, may be observed a sere and yellow leaf, like the white hairs that are interspersed among the dark brown tresses of manhood, and indicate the sure advance of hoary years. The fields of ripe and yellow grain are gleaming through the open places in the woods, making a pleasant contrast with their greenness, and exhibiting, in the same instant, the signs of a cheerful harvest, and the melancholy decay of vegetation. The swallows are assembling their little hosts upon the roofs and fences,

preparing for their annual migration, and all animate and inanimate things announce the speedy decline of summer.

Already do I hear, at nightfall, the chirping of the cicadas, whose notes are, at the same time, the harvest hymn of nature, and a dirge over the departure of flowers. When the evenings are perceptibly lengthened, and the air partakes of the exhilarating freshness of autumn, these happy insects commence their anthems of gladness; and their monotonous, but agreeable melody, is in sweet unison with the general serenity of nature. Though these voices come from myriads of cheerful hearts, there is yet a plaintiveness in their modulation, which, like the songs we heard in our early years, calls up the pensive remembrance of scenes that are past, and turns our thoughts inwardly upon almost forgotten joys and sorrows. How different are these emotions from those awakened by the first sound of the piping frogs that hail the opening of spring, and which are attended by feelings of unmingled cheerfulness! All these sounds, though perhaps not designed particularly for man, seem adapted by nature to harmonize agreeably with our feelings; and there is a soothing and lulling influence in the song of the cicadas, that softens into tranquillity the melancholy it inspires, and tempers all our sadness with pleasure.

We no longer perceive that peculiar charm of spring vegetation, that comes from the health and the freshness of every growing thing; and we cannot help associating the flowers of August, with the dry, withered, and dying plants that everywhere surround them. In June, every thing in the aspect of nature is harmonious; all is greenness and gladness, and nothing appears in

company with the flowers, to disfigure their charms, or to affect the sight with displeasure. But August presents a motley spectacle of rank and inelegant weeds, that overshadow the flowers, and the beauty of the fields is often hidden by the withered vegetation of the last month. This appearance, however, is obvious only in those places which have been disturbed by the ploughshare. Where the fields still remain in a wild state, nature preserves, throughout the season, more or less of that harmony, which is so remarkable in the early months. Wherever the hand of man has disturbed the order of nature, there, until she has had time to repair the mischief he has done, rank weeds spring up and disfigure the prospect, while in the native wilds, all things succeed one another in a delightful and harmonious progression.

It is in the tilled lands only that we observe those dreary collections of luxuriant weeds and decayed herbage, intermingled with flowers that seem, on account of their beauty, to deserve a better fate. In the wilds, nature always preserves the harmony of her seasons. Each herb and flower appears at proper time; and when one species has attained maturity, it gives place to its rightful successor, without any confusion, all rising and declining like the heavenly hosts of night, and clothing the face of the landscape in perpetual bloom and verdure. Seldom do we behold a parterre that equals in beauty those half wild spots, where after a partial clearing of the forest, nature has been left to herself a sufficient time to recover from the effects of art, and to rear those plants which are best fitted to the soil and the season.

Let the lover of flowers and landscapes who would learn how to gather round his dwelling all those rural

beauties, that will meet and blend in harmony, receive his lesson from nature in her own wilds. Let him look upon her countenance, before it has been disfigured by a barbarous art, to acquire his ideas of beauty and propriety, and he will never mar her features, by adding gems that do not harmonize with their native expression, plucked from the bosom of a foreign clime. Then, although he may not sit under the shade of the palm or the myrtle, or roam among sweet-scented orange groves, in the climate of northern fruits and northern flowers, he needs no foreign trees or shrubbery to decorate his grounds, or adapt them to his pleasures. In a forest of his own native pines, he may find an arbor in summer, and a shelter in winter, as odoriferous as a grove of cinnamon and myrtles; and the fruits of his own orchards will yield him a repast more savory than the produce of the Indies.

XXV.

THE THREE DEITIES.

THREE Deities preside in Nature's fane,
And turn to bliss the bounties of her reign.
They hold her fairest offerings, and distil,
Like dew from heaven, the better joys that fill
The earth to bless all creatures. Every place
Is made resplendent with their light and grace.
They shed on earth and scatter o'er the sphere
All those bright gifts that charm the varied year.
For them mild Vesper sheds her parting glow,
And Iris lifts in heaven her showery bow.
For them the Dryads wreath the moss-grown wood,
And dress the mead, and paint the silvery flood.
Each little leaf that rustles on the spray,
Through which the zephyrs sing their roundelay,
The sounds of darkness, heard when night is still,
The whispering waves, the breeze upon the hill,
By them are tuned to pleasure, and designed
As bonds of love to nature and mankind.

The first of these is Beauty; with her fingers,
She pencils all the hues where twilight lingers.
The moon's soft beam is hers, the fire-fly's light,
The meteor's flash, the diamond host of night;

The clouds that spread their silken webs on high,
The water's sheen, the azure of the sky :
All things that sweetly glow, or brightly shine,
At purple dawn of morn, or day's decline.
She gives the insect host their varied stain,
And calls the wild flowers out upon the plain.
For her the queen of spring adorns her walks,
Tints the green herbs, and binds upon their stalks
Gems of the purest radiance, azure bells,
And hyacinths, and pensive asphodels.
The native wilds, the cultivated farms,
Springtime and summer, with their glowing charms,
And autumn, with his myriad hues, dispense
Her favors in unbounded affluence.
There's not a flower that blossoms in the field,
Or ruddy tint the twilight has revealed ;
A gladdening beam upon the cheek of morn,
Or sparkling wreath the mountain's brows have worn,
That beauty has not reared to charm the soul,
And bind it to the earth, as by divine control.

Then Music comes — the second of the twain,
With warbling birds and echoes in her train,
Led on by zephyrs. In her hand she bears
A lute, with chords to charm away our cares.
She's Beauty's sister-twin. The summer gales
Are her attendants, whom o'er hills and dales,
She sends to bear her tuneful melodies,
And harmonize them with the vocal breeze.
Her's are the songs of morn, the evening bell,
The voices borne from mountain, rock, and fell ;
The gentle whispers of the pebbly shore,
And murmurs of its more tumultuous roar.

The babbling echoes, that in deserts rude,
Delight to cheer the silent solitude
With voices, are her daughters. Creeping things,
That cherup from the hedges and the springs ;
The feathered warblers of the grove ; the leaves,
That murmur when the rustling zephyr heaves,
Are her peculiar charge. At eventide,
If you go forth along the green hill-side,
You then will feel her presence, and confess
Her power to add to nature's loveliness.

But there is still a loftier power, who sprang
From heaven, when first the stars of morning sang
Rejoicings, as the Ruler of the spheres
Apportioned time in seasons, days, and years ;
Her name Sublimity — the skies her throne —
Her dwelling-place unfathomed and unknown !
The blue serene of heaven she studs with stars,
And rolls the meteors in their fiery cars.
She loves to pause where mighty torrents dash
Down deep abysses ; where the billows' crash
Is heard upon some lonely rock-bound coast,
And moaning winds tell tales of vessels wrecked and lost ;
Where mountains rear their summits, lightnings flare,
And northern lights emit their lurid glare.
She holds dominion o'er the boundless deep,
When waves are dashed on high, or when they calmly
sleep.

Hers are the prairies and the seas, where space
Is limitless, and where the plains embrace
The circling skies. She lends a needful aid
To Beauty's mild creations ; thus displayed,
Each gives to each a more enlivening power,
As moonlight beautifies the solemn midnight hour.

XXVI.

ANGLING.

I HAVE often thought that the practice of angling was so intimately connected with the prospect of green fields, and the smell of fresh meadows, that the general fondness for the sport, originated in a great measure, in our love of nature. I am so far, therefore, from considering the angler a model of patience, as Dr. Franklin regarded him, that I would rather look upon him as a sort of indolent devotee of nature, who prefers the voluptuous quiet of this sedentary sport to the more active habits of the gunner, the botanist, or the geologist. There are individuals, undoubtedly, who delight in angling from the love of the sport itself. Such are our inveterate fishers around the wharves and harbors, and who are generally better acquainted with the respective flavors of the different species of the finny tribe, than with fishes as subjects of natural history. But the majority of anglers will be found to be genuine lovers of nature; and like old Izaak Walton, as familiar with the plants that are growing at their feet, as with the little shining inhabitants of the lake and stream.

I am not of that sect of the humane who would condemn angling, on account of its cruelty. The pangs

suffered by a little fish, while expiring on the green bank are but momentary, and probably not to be compared with those of a bird, when first taken from his native haunts, and shut up in a cage. Fishes do not seem to be endowed with the sense of feeling, or touch, and have a brain so small as hardly to afford them a very definite consciousness. They have the senses of sight, of hearing, of smell, and of taste, for without these they could not provide for their own wants. They possess a very low form of intelligence and sensibility, and may be severely cut, without showing signs of feeling. If we wound a poor bird, he may lead a life of pain and misery for many weeks. He is a creature of warm blood, endowed with intelligence, and a capacity for grief. He is regarded as the companion and benefactor of man, and as having certain inalienable rights — such as the enjoyment of life and liberty, and the means of obtaining a livelihood. But fishes, the voracious devourers of their own young, whom they cannot recognize and do not protect, are plainly incapable of mental suffering, and may be taken in unlimited quantities, without danger of causing an inconvenient scarcity. Hence, though all living creatures are more or less endowed with a power of feeling pleasure and pain, and have a certain right to the enjoyment of life, I regard the destruction of a fish in the same light as the killing of a fly, or the trampling on a worm. I would not needlessly destroy an insect, or set foot upon a worm; but I believe the united sufferings of a thousand fishes in the agonies of death, would not equal the pangs suffered by one little child with a burnt finger.

There is no other sport so well adapted to the habits of a thoughtful man, as that of angling, leading him

out at noonday, under the shade of trees, or in the evening by the glassy stream, on whose mirrored surface he may view the surrounding hills and woods, while watching for the dimpling movements of the water that indicate the nibbling of the fish. There can be no more delightful recreation in serene summer weather, when the heat of the atmosphere will not permit one to engage in more active toil or amusement. And there is no end to the pleasing fancies in which one may indulge the mind, while listening to the varied notes of the birds, that always frequent the borders of streams and lakes, or watching the motions of some little animal, that will occasionally peep out upon one, while occupied in his quiet amusement.

When we are seeking after pleasure, it is not always the prominent object of pursuit that is the source of the principal enjoyments we experience. Our object may be an errand of business in itself disagreeable, and our pleasures may spring from our adventures and observations, during the time occupied in the performance of the errand. A walk is seldom interesting, however pleasant the scenery and other objects on the road, if we are sauntering without any particular aim. But if we have gone out to accomplish a certain purpose, which is of sufficient importance to keep up our resolution to proceed, every scene on the road may be productive of a high degree of pleasure. Thus it seems to me that in angling, the pleasure of the pursuit is, in almost all cases, derived from collateral circumstances, though the latter would be nothing without the purpose before us of taking our finny game.

The pleasure of angling consists in having something agreeable to occupy the mind, while indulging in the voluptuous sensations that attend us, when surrounded

by the agreeable circumstances of green fields, fragrant woods, and pleasant prospects. To sit beside a stream for half a day, under the spreading branches of an oak, would be but a dull amusement for the most enthusiastic lover of nature, if he had no purpose in view, except to enjoy the mere sensations derived from surrounding objects. But let him throw a hook and bait into the stream, with the intention of taking a few fishes to grace his table; and however insignificant their value, it is sufficient to furnish a motive for watching a float for many hours. The expectations which are thus aroused, and the agreeable exercise of the attention and the ingenuity, with the additional pleasure derived from the varied scenery, the fresh odors of vegetation, and the many agreeable sounds from animated nature, unite in rendering it one of the most interesting of employments.

Though I have never been a skilful or inveterate angler, yet the review of my angling excursions always brings before me, some of my most pleasing recollections. The stillness of the occupation prepares the mind to receive impressions from surrounding objects, with singular vividness. The sight of the little fishes, as they are darting about among the long stems of the water-lilies, is then as pleasant to us as to a child. We watch every minute object with close attention, though it be but the little water-beetles as they whirl about in still water near the shore, or the minute blossoms of the potamogeton, that lift up their heads above the glassy wave. The lighting of a butterfly on the blue spikes of the pickerel-weed, or the humming of a dragonfly, as he pursues his microscopic prey among the tall sedges and pond-weeds, never fail to attract our notice, while engaged in our day-dreaming occupation.

While watching the float, as it sails gently about with the wind, occasionally dimpling the surface of the water, we do not confine our attention to this alone. Not a bubble on the glossy sheen of the lake, or the flitting shadow of a cloud as it passes over the sky, escapes our notice. Every thing that moves, and every thing that can be seen or heard, excites our curiosity as in the still darkness of night. When the fishes are inactive, as they often are during the heat of the day, we have little to do except to watch and observe the scenes and objects around us. At such times our attention is frequently attracted to something, that hitherto might always have been unobserved; and the squirrel that sits watching us on the bough of a neighboring tree; the little bird that is busy weaving stems, at no great distance, into the fork of a hazel-bush, and the sober cattle that have waded up to their knees into the shallow water, are all observed and studied with delight.

But the amusement of angling is not associated with sedentary observations alone; it is also connected with many interesting excursions in quest of more lucky fishing ground. How often has it led us into delightful explorations of the woody boundaries of ponds, carrying us into seemingly impenetrable thickets, and causing the sudden discovery of some beautiful or curious plant, hitherto unknown to us, or introduced us to some new and interesting bird or quadruped. It was on one of these rambles, by its musical and melancholy cooings, that I first discovered the wicker-nest of the turtle-dove, with its solitary egg, in the branches of a slender white pine. On one of these occasions, also, I encountered for the first time, the drooping fragrant flower of the *linnæa borealis* — that exquisite production of

northern climes, which is aptly named for the great Swedish botanist.

But the exercise alone, with the continual excitement of the curiosity is sufficient to give interest to these excursions. Now we are led into green paths, through the fragrant bushes, some laden with flowers and others with fruit; now half-bewildered by their intricacies, and then suddenly stumbling into a romantic view of the water and the surrounding scenery. Soon we pass into a deep dell, forming the bed of a stream, which has given rise to a multitude of rare and curious plants, and rouse the variegated summer duck from a solitary pool, imbosomed in the thicket; finally, having arrived at an open pasture, a flock of sheep, startled at our approach, scamper off with resounding feet to a distant elevation. Then do we think with peculiar delight upon the pleasures of rural life, and regret that necessity which is ever leading us away from the abodes of peace and happiness. After performing a tour around the pond, we return perhaps to our original fishing ground, pleased with the simple adventures we have encountered, and prepared to commence anew our patient toil.

As the decline of day begins to be apparent, the fishes are more active in their nibbling, and there is a more general stir among all the creatures of the field and wood. The thrushes are more musical in the neighboring thicket, and the yellow-throat comes within a few yards of us, and sings upon the branch of an alder bush, as if he was pleased with our company. The frogs begin to be more loquacious, and our attention is attracted by different objects from those we observed at noonday or in the morning. A tortoise,

now and then, protrudes its beak and eyes above the smooth sheen of the water, a little fish leaps out and makes a sudden splash, or a solitary snipe, with twittering notes, pursues its graceful flight along the shore.

At this time, our luck as fishermen is usually the most propitious. The fishes that seem averse to the warm rays of the sun, come out of deep water, as day declines, and look out for their prey, and are more active in nibbling the bait. After this time, in the space of half an hour, we often take fishes enough to make amends for any previous bad luck. Presently the float grows dim to the sight, the dew is perceptible on the grass, and the evening star, as it shines through the semicircle of light that surrounds the place where the sun went down, reminds us of home.

We prepare for our return, and for a change of scene and rest from our weariness; and home is never so delightful as it is after one of these excursions. There is a luxury in our rest from toil which has been wearying but not excessive; and the pleasures of social intercourse with our domestic circle are also greatly enhanced by a half day's solitude. We partake of the bounties of our own table with a zest that seems to prove it to be the design of nature, that man should toil for his subsistence, if he means to enjoy the good things of her bounty. Thus terminates an amusement that brings us nearer to nature, while we are engaged in it, that leads to pleasant observations and tranquil musings, while it prepares the mind to feel a renewed pleasure, when wearied but not exhausted, we seek rest in the bosom of our family.

XXVII.

THE FLOWERLESS PLANTS.

As a tribe of vegetable curiosities, pleasantly associated with cool grotts, damp shady woods, rocks rising in the midst of the forest, with the edges of fountains, the roofs of old houses, and the trunks and decayed branches of trees, may be named the flowerless plants. Few persons know the extent of their advantages in the economy of vegetation; still less are they aware how greatly they contribute to the beauty of some of the most beautiful places in nature, affording tints for the delicate shading of many a native landscape, and an embossment for the display of some of the fairest flowers of the field. The violet and the anemone, that peep out upon us in the opening of spring, have a livelier glow and animation when imbosomed in their green beds of mosses, and the arethusa blushes more beautifully by the side of the stream, when overshadowed by the broad pennons of the umbrageous fern. The old tree with its mosses wears a look of freshness in its decay, the bald rock loses its baldness, with its crown of lichens and ferns, and every barren spot, in the pastures or by the way-side, is enlivened and variegated by the carpet of flowerless plants, that

spread their green gloss and many-colored fringes over the surface of the soil.

Mosses enter into all our ideas of picturesque ruins ; for they alone are evidence that the ruins are the work of time. An artificial ruin can have no such accompaniment, until time has hallowed it by veiling its surface with these memorials. They join with the ivy in adorning the relics of ancient grandeur, and spread over the perishable works of art the symbols of a beauty that endureth for ever. While they are allied to ruins, and remind us of age and decay, they are themselves glowing in the freshness of youth, and cover the places they occupy with a perpetual verdure. They cluster around the decayed objects of nature and art, and are themselves the nurseries of many a little flower that depends on them for sustenance and protection. Though they bear no flowers upon their stems, they delight in cherishing in their soft velvet knolls the wood-anemone, the starwort, (*Houstonia cærulea*), the cypripedium, and the white orchis — the nun of the meadows — whose roots are imbedded among the fibres of the peat mosses, and derive support from the moisture that is accumulated around them. Nature has provided them as a protection to many delicate plants, which, embowered in their capillary foliage, are enabled to sustain the heat of summer and the cold of winter, and remain secure from the browsing herds.

Winter, which is a time of sleep with the higher vegetable tribes, is a season of activity with many of the flowerless plants. There are certain species of mosses and lichens that vegetate under the snow, and but few of the mosses are at all injuriously affected by the action of frost. By this power of living and growing in winter, they are fitted to act as a protection to

other plants from the vicissitudes of winter weather, and by their close texture they prevent the washing away of the soil from the declivities into the valleys. They answer the double purpose of catching the floating particles of dust and retaining them about their roots, and of preventing any waste from the places they occupy. Finding in them the same protection which is afforded by the snow, or by the matting of straw provided by the gardener, there are many plants that vegetate under their surface, secure from the alternate action of freezing and thawing in winter, and of drought in summer. Hence certain flowers blossom more luxuriantly in a bed of mosses than in the unoccupied soil.

The mosses are seldom found in cultivated lands. As they grow entirely on the shallow surface, the labors of the tiller of the soil are fatal to them. They delight in old woods, in moist barren pastures, in solitary moorlands, and in all unfrequented places. In those situations they remain fresh and beautiful, while they prepare for the higher vegetable tribes many a barren spot, that must otherwise remain for ever without its plant. They are therefore the pioneers of vegetable life; and nature, when she selects an uncongenial tract to be made productive of fruits or flowers, covers the surface with a close verdure of moss, and variegates it with lichens, before she strews the seeds of the higher plants to vegetate among their roots. The wise husbandman, who, by a careful rotation of crops, causes his land to be constantly productive, is but an humble imitator of nature's great principle of action.

The mosses have never been made objects of extensive cultivation by our florists. Every rambler in the wild wood knows their value and their beauty, which

seem to have been overlooked by the cultivator. They undoubtedly possess qualities that might be rendered valuable for purposes of artificial embellishment. There is no tree with foliage of so perfect a green tint as that of the moss which covers the roofs of very old buildings. The mossy knolls in damp woods are peculiarly attractive on account of their verdure, and the fine velvety softness of their pleasantly rounded surface. Though the mosses produce no flowers, the little germs that grow on the extremities of their hair-like stems are perfect jewels. With them, however, it is the stem that exhibits the most beauty of hues, varying from a deep yellow to a clear and lively claret or crimson, while the termination is green or brown. I have nothing to say of the physiology of their propagation. I treat of mosses only as they are beautiful objects of sight, and useful agents in unfolding and distributing the bounties of nature. This tribe furnishes no sustenance to man or to any other animal. Those eatable plants which are called by the name of mosses are either lichens or sea-weeds. Nature, who, with a provident hand, renders many of her productions capable of supplying a manifold purpose in her economy, has limited the agency of the mosses to a few simple and beautiful services. They perform under her invisible guidance, for the field and the forest, what is done by the painter and the embosser for the works of the builder of temples and palaces.

The ferns have fewer picturesque attractions than the mosses; but like the latter, they are allied with the primitive wilds of nature, with gloomy swamps, which they clothe with verdure, and with rocky precipices, on whose shelvy sides they are distributed like the tiles on a roof of a house. They resemble mosses in their dis-

similarity to common vegetable forms ; and their broad wing-like leaves or fronds are the conspicuous ornaments of wet woods and solitary pastures which are unvisited by the plough. By their singular appearance we are reminded of the primitive forms of vegetation on the earth's surface, and of the luxuriant productions of the tropics. In places where they are abundant, the hellebore, with its erect stem and prim foliage, towers above the low shrubbery, and the purple *sarracenia* rears its nodding flowers, like some strange visitant from another clime.

The ferns are for the most part a coarse tribe of plants, having more beauty in their forms than in their texture. In temperate latitudes it is only their leaf or frond that is conspicuous, their stems being either prostrate or subterranean. Yet in some of the species nothing can be more beautiful than the ramifications of their fronds. In their arrangements we may observe a perfect harmony and regularity, without the formality that marks the compound leaves of other plants. Herein nature affords an example of a compound assemblage of parts, in a pleasing uniformity that far exceeds the most ingenious devices of art. Apparently similar arrangements are seen in the leaves of the poison hemlock, the milfoil, and the Roman wormwood ; but their formality is not so beautifully blended with variety as that of the compound-leaved ferns.

In tropical countries some of the ferns are woody plants, attaining the size of trees, rising with a branchless trunk over fifty feet in height, and then spreading out their leaves like a palm tree. Hence they are singularly attractive objects to the traveller from the north, by the sight of which he seems to be carried back to the early ages of the world, before the human race had

a foothold upon the earth. Here we know them only as an inferior tribe in relation to size, the tallest seldom exceeding two or three feet in height. Every thing in their appearance is singular, from the time when they first push up their purple and yellow scrolls above the surface of the soil, covered with a sort of downy plumage, to the time when their leaves are spread out like an eagle's wings, and their long spikes of russet flowers, if they may be so called, stand erect above the weeds and grasses, forming a beautiful contrast with the pure summer greenness of all other vegetation.

There are few plants that exceed in beauty and delicacy of structure the common maiden-hair. The main stem is of a glossy jet, and divided into two principal branches, that produce in their turn several other branches from their upper side, resembling a compound pinnate leaf without its formality. In woods in the western part of this State is a remarkable fern called the walking leaf. It derives its name from a singular habit of striking root at the extremities of the fronds, giving origin to new plants, and travelling along in this manner from one point to another. There is only one climbing fern among our native plants. Equally beautiful and rare, it is found only in a few localities all the way from Massachusetts to the West Indies. Unlike other ferns in its twining habit, it has also palmate leaves, with five lobes, and bears its fruit in a panicle, like the *osmunda*. But we need not search out the rare ferns for specimens of elegance or beauty. The common polypody, with its minutely divided leaves, covers the sides of steep woody hills and rocky precipices, and adds a beautiful evergreen verdure to their barren slopes, otherwise destitute of attractions. The ferns and the mosses are peculiarly the ornaments of waste

and desert places, clothing with verdure barren plains and rough declivities.

I have always attached a romantic interest to the seaweeds, (Algae,) whose forms remind one of the haunts of the Nereids, of the mysterious chambers of the ocean, and of all that is interesting among the deep inlets of the sea. Though flowerless, they are unsurpassed in the delicate arrangements of their branches, and the variety of colors they display. We see them only when broken off from the rocks on which they grew, and washed upon the shore, where they lie, after a storm, like flowers scattered upon the greensward by the scythe of the mower. When branching out in the perfection of their forms, underneath the clear briny tide, they are unsurpassed by few plants in elegance. The artist has taken advantage of their peculiar branching forms, and their delicate hues, and weaves them into chaplets of the most beautiful designs.

The sea-weeds seem to be allied to the lichens, and are considered by some botanists as the same plants modified by growing under water, and tinted by the iodine and bromine which they imbibe from the sea.

The lichens are the lowest tribe in the scale of vegetation. They make their appearance on naked rocks, and clothe them with a sort of fringe, holding fast on the rock for security, and deriving their chief sustenance from the atmosphere and the particles of dust wafted on the winds and lodged at their roots. They have properly, however, no roots, neither have they leaves or stem; yet they are almost infinitely varied in their forms, hues, and ramifications. They grow in all places which are exposed to air and moisture, on the surface of rocks, old walls, fences, posts, and the branches of trees. Some of the species are foliaceous, resembling

leaves without branches, and without any distinct or regular outlines, and found mostly on rocks. Others are erect and ramified like trees and shrubs, but without any thing that represents foliage. Such is that common grey lichen (*Cenomyce*) that covers our barren hills, which is a perfect hygrometer, crumbling under the feet in dry weather, and yielding to the step like velvet, whenever the air contains moisture. In similar places, and growing along with it, is found one of the *hepatic* mosses, that produces those little tubercles—the fructification of the plant—resembling dots of sealing-wax, and eagerly sought by artists who manufacture designs in moss. But the most beautiful lichens are those which are pendant from the branches of trees, (*Usnea*,) consisting of branching threads, of an ash-green color, and bearing little circular shields at their extremities. These lichens give character to moist woods and low cedar swamps, where they hang like funereal drapery from the boughs and deepen the gloom of their solitudes.

Lichens, though inhabiting all parts of the earth, are particularly luxuriant in cold climates, thriving in extreme polar latitudes, where not another plant can live. Nature seems to have designed them as an instrument for preparing every barren spot with the means of sustaining the more valuable plants. Not only do they cause a gradual accumulation of soil by their decay, but they actually feed upon the rocks by means of oxalic acid that exudes from their substance. By this process the surface of the solid rock is changed into a soil fitted for the nutrition of plants. After the lichens have perished, the mosses and ferns take root in the soil that is furnished by their decay. One vegetable tribe after another grows to perfection and perishes, but to

give place to its more noble successor, until a sufficient quantity of soil is accumulated for the growth of a forest of trees. In such order may the whole earth have been gradually covered with plants, by the perishing of one tribe after another, leaving its substance for the support of a superior tribe, until the work of creation is completed.

Among the grotesque productions of nature, the *fungi*, or mushroom tribe, ought undoubtedly to be named as the most remarkable, attaining the whole of their growth in the space of a few days, and sometimes of a few hours. They are simple in their parts, like what may be supposed to have been the earliest productions of nature. They have no leaves, or flowers, or branches. They will grow and continue in health without light, requiring nothing but air and moisture above their roots. Though so low in the scale of vegetation, they are not without elegance of forms and beauty of colors, and are remembered in connection with dark pine woods, where, forming a sort of companionship with the *monotropas*, they are particularly luxuriant. Neither are they deficient in poetical interest, as these plants are the cause of those fairy rings that attract attention by their mysterious growth in circles, on the greensward in the pastures.

The mushrooms vary extremely in their forms and sizes. Some are as slender as the finest mosses, tinted with gold and scarlet, and almost transparent. Others resemble a parasol, with their upper surface of a brilliant straw-color, dotted with purple, and their under surface of rose or lilac. They seem to riot in all sorts of beautiful and peculiar shapes and combinations. But the greater number are remarkable only for their grotesque forms, as if intended as a burlesque upon the

other productions of the earth. Almost every tree, after its decay, gives origin to a particular species of mushroom. They are often seen as small as pins, with little heads resembling red and yellow beads, growing like a forest under the moist protection of some broad-leaved shrubbery. Over the surface of all accumulations of decayed vegetable matter they are seen spreading out their umbrellas and lifting up their heads, often springing up suddenly, as if by enchantment. But they are short-lived, and soon perish if the light of the sun is admitted into their shady haunts.

Thus far have I endeavored to call attention to the flowerless plants, not designing to treat of them in a scientific manner. I have said nothing, therefore, of the Characeæ and the Equisetums, lest I make useless repetitions of remarks which are necessarily of a general character. Whoever will take pains to examine these plants will discover an inexhaustible variety in their forms, their modes of growth, and their fructification. Hence those botanists who have given particular attention to this class of plants have been noted for the enthusiasm with which they pursued their researches. I have never been initiated into the mysteries of their life, growth, and continuance. I treat of them only as they serve to add beauty to a little nook in the garden, to a dripping rock, or to a solitary dell in the wild wood. The more we study them, the more are we charmed with their singularity and elegance.

Thus, over all her productions has nature spread the charms of beautiful forms and tints, from the humblest mushroom that grows upon the decayed stump of a tree, or the lichen that hangs in drapery from its living branches, to the lofty tree itself that rears its head

among the clouds. It is not in all cases those objects which are most attractive to a superficial observation, that furnish the most delight to a scrutinizing mind. The greatest beauties of nature are hidden from vulgar sight, as if purposely reserved to reward the efforts of those who, with minds devoted to truth, pursue their researches in the great temple of science.

XXVIII.

SEPTEMBER.

WE have hardly become familiar with summer ere autumn has arrived, with its cool nights, its foggy mornings, and its clear halcyon days. Yet the close of summer is but the commencement of a variety of pleasant rural occupations, of reaping and fruit gathering, and the still more exciting sports of the field. After this time we are comparatively exempt from the extremes of temperature, and are free to ramble at any distance, without exposure to the sudden showers, that so often spring up in summer, without warning us of their approach. Though the spicy odors of June are no longer wafted upon the gales, yet there is a clearness and a freshness in the atmosphere, more agreeable than fragrance, affording buoyancy to the mind and elasticity to the frame.

The various employments of the farmer are changed into agreeable recreations; and the anxious toils of planting and haymaking have given place to the less wearisome and more exhilarating labors of the harvest. Besides the pleasures of the sportsman, there are successions of fruit-gatherings, and rural excursions of various kinds, from the beginning of this month to the end of the next, that impart to the young many cheerful

themes of remembrance for all the rest of their lives. The provident simpler may be seen upon the hills, busily employed in gathering medicinal plants for her own humble dispensary. Close by her side are neatly bound sheaves of thoroughwort, hardhack, thousand-root, St. John's wort, pennyroyal, and lifeeverlasting, which she is benevolently providing for the supply of her neighborhood. And while thus employed she feels the reward of the just, in the pleasing contemplation of the good she may perform, when winter comes with its fevers and colds.

There is no season of the year when the landscape presents so beautiful an appearance, just before sunset, as during this month. The grass has a peculiar velvety greenness, being without any mixture of downy tassels and panicles of seeds; for the present covering of the fields is mostly the second growth of vegetation, after the first had been mowed by the husbandman or cropped by the grazing herds. The herbage exhibits little but the leaf, which has been thickened in its growth and made green by the rains of early autumn. When the atmosphere has its usual autumnal clearness, and the sun is just declining, while his rays gleam horizontally over the fields, the plain exhibits a most brilliant verdure, unlike that of any of the earlier months. When this wide landscape of uniform greenness is viewed in connection with the blue firmament that is spread over our heads, it seems as if the earth and the sky were vying with one another, in the untarnished loveliness of their appropriate colors.

There is usually a still serenity during September, almost unknown to any former part of the year; and all the elements seem to be restored to harmony. Yet this is no season for inaction; for the temperate

weather, too pleasant for confinement, and too cool for indolent repose, invites even the weary to ramble. If the early autumn in our climate be unhealthy, it is owing to no insalubrity of the atmosphere, to no pestilence borne upon the clear autumnal breezes, but to the folly and improvidence of man, who revels without restraint in the unbounded luxuries now placed before him. Of all the months the climate of September is the most equable and salubrious; and nearly the same temperature is wafted from every quarter of the heavens. The sea-breezes spring up from the ocean, almost with the mildness of the balmy south-west, and the rude north wind has been softened into a delightful blandness by his tender dalliance with summer.

The principal landscape beauty of the present month consists of the profusion of bright-colored fruits that meet the eye on every side, in the now deserted haunts of the flowers. The scarlet berries of the nightshade, occasionally varied with blossoms, are hanging like clusters of the purest gems, from the crevices in the stone-walls, through which the vines have made their clambering tour. In wet places the calla and the dragon-root display their compact bunches of red fruit, side by side with the spotted berries of the Solomon's-seal. On each side of the walls, the elder-trees in interrupted rows, are bending down with the weight of their dark purple fruit, while here and there the loftier viburnums stand firmly by their side, some species exhibiting their slate-colored berries upon erect stems, others hanging them from the extremities of their branches, like pendulous clusters of grapes. The dark berries of the privet, in conical bunches, are scattered among its prim branches and myrtle-like foliage, and the berries of the wild rose are beginning to redden, along with the daily

brightening tints of the surrounding shrubbery. Above all, the barberry-bushes, scattered over the hills, some in irregular patches, others following the lines of the stone-walls, meet the eye, with their long slender branches fringed with delicate racemes of variegated fruit, changing from vermilion to a bright scarlet, and forming hedge-rows and coppices of the most dazzling beauty.

Yet all these are nothing in comparison with the splendor and variety of the orchard fruits. September is the counterpart of June, and exhibits the transformation of the flowers of early summer, into the ripe and ruddy harvest. The wild cherry-trees are heavily laden with their dark purple clusters, and flocks of robins and waxwings are busy, all the day, in their merry plunder among the branches. The fences are overshadowed with fruit-trees of many species, presenting a spectacle more showy than their flowery magnificence in early June. But in the fruits there is something less lovely than in the flowers, to which imagination always assigns some moral attributes. The various fruits of the harvest we prize, as good and bounteous gifts; but flowers win our affections, like beings endowed with life and thought; and when we note their absence or their departure, we feel a painful sense of melancholy, as when we have bid adieu to living friends. With flowers we associate the sweetness, the loveliness, and dear and bright remembrances of spring; like human beings, they have contributed to our intellectual enjoyments. But there are no such moral associations connected with the fruits; and while the orchards are resplendent with their luxuriant beauty, they can never affect the mind like the sight of the flowers.

Though autumn is properly the season of fruits, Sep-

tember comes to us crowned with a new world of vegetation unwitnessed in the joyous summer time. The flowers of this month have little of the delicacy of the earlier tribes, yet in glowing tints and luxuriance of growth, they far surpass any that have preceded them. The golden-rods that began to be conspicuous about the middle of August, have multiplied until the fences exhibit almost interminable hedge-rows of yellow nodding plumes. Millions of asters of an endless variety of sizes, arrangements, and colors, have arisen in every soil and situation, some of a pure whiteness, some purple, others of a dark blue, and fringed with petals, as fine as the rays that sparkle about a midnight taper. In the borders of the woods, and in the meadows which have been vacated by the purple orchis and the pale arethusa, several species of gerardia, or American fox-glove, hang their golden blossoms, like so many lamps within the gloom of their shady retreats.

Wherever the scythe of the mower has not cut down the flowers, the trumpet-weed and the yellow balsamine grow more thriftily than ever, and the fragrant spikes of the clethra have not entirely faded in the coppice. All over the hills and along the green road sides, the flowers of the autumnal hawk-weed, like the dandelions, their vernal sisters, are gleaming in golden profusion; and the white odorous everlastings, are everywhere pouring out their delicate and peculiar incense. Multitudes of thistles, of various forms and sizes, exhibit their bright globes of pink, white, and purple blossoms, and little goldfinches are hopping and twittering among their downy and ripened heads. The evening primroses are still brilliant after sunset, and in the later afternoon, and the hyssop spangles the brook sides with its yellow cups, blended with the delicate flowers of the purple

gerardia. But the glory of the meadows, during this season, is the golden coreopsis, that rivals all other plants by its superior gayety and brilliancy. Finally, in the latter part of the month, when a greater part of the floral beauties of the season have faded, comes forth the blue-fringed gentian, having such extreme delicacy, as to make one almost fancy, that the bosom of May had been plundered of one of her proper ornaments, to deck the hoary brows of autumn.

The birds are almost silent; now and then we hear one piping a few broken strains; but he does not seem to be pleased with his own song, and no one answers him from his feathered comrades. Their season of departure is near, and numerous cares distract the tune-ful band. The swallows are now no longer seen to skim with twittering flight along the surface of the waters; or sailing aloft in the air, to forewarn the swain of coming showers. The little busy wren, one of our latest warblers, is also silent, and all are slowly leaving us one after another. It is a pleasant occupation to watch their various movements, their altered manners, and their unwonted shyness. They sing no more; but twitter, cherup, and complain, always in restless motion, flying from tree to tree, like those preparing for a long journey.

But as the birds have become silent, the insect myriads, having attained the full maturity of their lives, are in glad chorus with all their little harps. The fields are covered with crickets and grasshoppers, and the whole air resounds with their hissing melodies. This is the honeymoon of their transient lifetime, and they are merrily singing their conjugal ditties, while the autumnal frosts are rapidly approaching, to put an end to their pleasures and to their lives. While chirp-

ing night and day, among the green herbage, they are but chanting the death-notes of their own brief existence. The little merry multitude, to whose myriad voices we are now listening with delight, contains perhaps, not one individual of those who were chirping in their places a year ago. All that generation has passed away, and ere another spring arrives, the present multitudinous choir will have perished likewise, to yield their places to a new million, which the next summer will usher into life. But they take no thought of the morrow, and like true epicureans, while the frosts are gathering around them, they sing and make merry, until the cold drives them into their retreats. One tribe after another discontinues its song, until the hard frosts commence, and leave the woods lonely and silent, but for the screaming of jays, the cawing of ravens, and the moaning of winds, as they pass over the melancholy graves of the departed things of summer.

XXIX.

MUSIC OF INSECTS.

ABOUT midsummer, the majority of the singing birds have become silent; but as one voice after another drops away, new hosts of musicians of a different character take up the chorus, and their spinning melodies are suggestive of the early and later harvest, as the voices of the birds are associated with seed-time and the season of flowers. In our climate the voices of no species of insects are very loud; but when their vast multitudes are united in chorus, they may often be heard above the din and clatter of a busy town. Nature is exhaustless in the means by which she may effect the same end; and birds, insects, and reptiles are each provided with different but equally effective instruments for producing sounds. While birds and quadrupeds produce them by means of a pipe connecting with their lungs, the frogs are provided with a sort of bag-pipe, and the insects represent, in their respective species, the harpist, the violinist, and the drummer.

Thus there are several species that make sounds by the vibration of a membrane attached to their sides or to the shoulders of their wings. Such are most of the crickets and grasshoppers. Others of the same tribes

rub their legs against a vibrating appendage connected with their sides, in humble imitation of violin players; lastly, the drumming insects, like the woodticks, are provided with a little hammer, which they strike against the ceiling that forms their retreat. It seems to me that no man can be indifferent to the sounds and music of insects. Even the buzzing of flies about one's chamber or sitting-room, has a soothing and tranquillizing influence; and may be regarded as one of those circumstances provided by nature to relieve the world of that dead silence, which would otherwise render this earth a dreary and melancholy abode. We are so formed, that every sound in nature, except her notes of alarm, by habit becomes pleasing and assimilated to music; and in the silence of winter, the increased delight afforded us by every remaining sound, is an evidence of this truth. The tiny hammering of the woodtick in the ceiling, the buzzing of flies, and, above all, the chirping of the cricket on the hearth, are among the poetical sounds that are associated with winter days at home, as the voices of the raven, the jay, and the woodpecker are suggestive of winter in the woods.

The fly, the gnat, the beetle, and the moth, though each utters a sound that awakens many pleasing thoughts and images, are not to be ranked among singing insects. The latter comprehend the locusts, the crickets, and the grasshoppers, that seem appointed by nature to take up their little lyre and drum, after the birds have laid aside their more musical pipe and flute. Though certain insects are supposed to make their sounds by means of wind, their apparatus is placed outside of their bodies, and as they have no lungs, the air is obtained by a peculiar inflation of their chests. Hence the musical appendages of such insects are con-

structed on the principle of the jewsharp, and of the reeds in a reed-organ. The grasshopper, in all ages, has been noted for his musical propensities; and is frequently represented as playing on the harp, in certain ancient emblematical vignettes.

Each genus of these insects has a peculiar modulation of his notes. The common green grasshopper, that during the months of August and September fills the whole atmosphere with his din, is found chiefly in the lowland meadows which are covered with the native grasses. This grasshopper modulates his notes somewhat like the cackling of a hen, uttering several chirps in rapid succession, and following them with a loud spinning sound, that seems to be the conclusion of the strain. His strains are continued incessantly, from the time when the sun is up high enough to dry the dews, until dewfall in the evening. These players are delighted with the clear bright sunshine, and sing but very little on cloudy days, even when the air is dry and warm.

There is another species of grasshopper with short wings, that makes a kind of grating sound, by scraping his legs, that serve for bows, against his sides, that represent, as it were, the strings of a viol. If we go into the whortleberry pastures, we may hear still another species, that makes a continued trilling, like the note of the hairbird, and often continues the sound half a minute or more, without apparent rest. This insect reminds me of the louder shrilling of those species which are heard in the southern States. The note of this grasshopper is not so agreeable as the notes of those whose strains are more rapidly intermittent.

The American locusts make their peculiar sounds by inflating air into their bodies, and expressing it between

two small apertures, situated a little below the base of their wings. These holes lead from a musical table, on each side of which are five or six thin bars, connected by exquisitely fine membranes. There is an insect of this tribe that is seldom heard until midsummer, and then only during the middle of the warmest days. His note is a pleasant remembrancer of sultry summer noon-days, of languishing heat, and refreshing shade. It begins low and increases in loudness, until it is almost deafening, and then gradually dies away into silence. The most skilful musician could not perform a more delightful *crescendo* and *diminuendo*. It has a peculiar vibratory sound, that seems to me highly musical and expressive. The insect that produces this note is a grotesque looking creature, resembling about equally a grasshopper and a humblebee.

The black crickets and their familiar chirping are well known to everybody. An insect of this tribe is celebrated in English romance as the "cricket on the hearth." The American species do not so habitually frequent our dwelling-houses; but they are all around our door steps, and by the way-side, under every dry fence and every sandy hill. They chirp night and day, and more or less in all kinds of weather. They commence their songs many weeks before the grasshoppers, and continue them to a later period in the autumn, not ceasing until the hard frosts have driven them into their retreats, and silenced them by a torpid sleep.

The note of the katydid, which is a drumming sound, has less music in it than that of some of the other insects I have described. In our literature no other species has become so widely celebrated, probably on account of the fancied resemblance of his notes to the word *katydid*. To my ear an assemblage of these little

musicians, all engaged in uttering their peculiar note, seems more like the hammering of a thousand little smiths in some busy hamlet of insects. There is nothing melodious in these sounds, and they are accordingly less suggestive of poetical thoughts than those of the green nocturnal grasshopper, that is heard at the same hour and in similar situations.

The nocturnal grasshoppers, sometimes called August pipers, commence their chirping about the second week in August. These are the true nightingales of insects, and the tribe that seems to me most worthy of being consecrated to poetry. There is a singular plaintiveness in their low and monotonous notes, which is the charm of the late summer and early autumnal evenings; and there are but few persons who are not affected, by these sounds, with a remarkable sensation of subdued but cheerful melancholy. This effect does not seem to be the result of association, so much as that of some peculiar cadence or modulation of the sound.

The notes of these nocturnal pipers are most commonly in unison, and accurately timed, as if they were singing in concert. They are the loudest singers of our indigenous insects, and it is worthy of notice, that they always vary their key-note, according to the temperature of the atmosphere, within certain degrees. They are evidently dependent on a certain amount of heat for their vivacity, and become more or less torpid, as the temperature of the atmosphere sinks below a certain point. Having noticed this fact at different times, I was induced to make a series of exact observations a few years since, by noticing the height of the mercury in Fahrenheit's thermometer, and at the same time finding the key upon which these insects were chirping. My observations were commenced early in August, and

carried through September, which was on that year as hot as July. The following is a general statement of the results.

When the temperature of the weather is indicated at 80° Fahrenheit, these insects will be found singing invariably as high as the key of F natural. When the mercury stands at 75°, they sing one tone lower or thereabouts, and always change from a higher to a lower key, as the air grows colder, and the contrary as it grows warmer. Their notes will be found to vary about one tone with every five degrees of change in the weather, as marked by the thermometer. I will add, that I have never heard them singing on a higher key than F, or on a lower key than G, comprising one note less than an octave in their compass. The weather is seldom warmer than 80° in the evening, and when it is colder than 60°, the insects always sing out of tune and time, and some of them as low as G. A colder temperature than this diminishes their vivacity, and silences a great many of the performers; but after they have become so torpid that the vibrations of their wings would produce a sound lower than G, they become silent.

It may be further remarked, that they hasten their time just in proportion as they raise their key, and that they likewise sing both in better time and better tune, in proportion to the warmth of the weather. When the mercury stood at 80°, I was never able to detect a single insect performing out of time or tune. The whole myriad choir were singing in perfect harmony; their key being about F natural, and their time about three notes to a second, which is very rapid. During this high temperature, the shriller toned insects, as the diurnal grasshoppers and the black crickets, sing in

unison with the August pipers, varying their tone in the same manner with the variations of temperature. But the diurnal insects do not keep time so well as those which are the particular subject of my observations.

When the mercury stands at about 70° , a few insects may be heard singing out of tune. Their time is also more imperfect, and is equal to about two notes to a second. When the weather is as cold as 60° — the average temperature of the evenings in August and September — the greater number will be heard on the key of B *flat*. Their time, however, in this state of the weather, is very imperfect, and a great many will be heard singing out of tune, some a tone or a semitone higher, and others as much lower than B *flat*. I attribute this difference to the different degrees of warmth which they may find, according as they are more or less protected from the external air. If one, for example, be confined in a room in the house, when the outer air is cool, the one confined will chirp several notes higher than any that are singing out of doors. When the temperature is very warm, there is probably more uniformity of heat in all places and situations, than when it is cooler. Often, on a sudden change of temperature from warm to cool, some individuals that happen to be in a little snug retreat that still preserves the early heat of the day, will sing more briskly and on a higher key than others. When the weather is below 60° , all the insects sing very feebly, without regard to time or tune; those only that happen to be protected under the warm projection of a roof, or the trunk of a tree, chirping on a higher key than the rest, and with more vivacity.

I have no doubt that with an accurate thermometer,

and a perfectly tuned instrument, the corresponding changes produced in the shrillness of the tones of these little insects, by the changes in the temperature of the atmosphere, might be marked with such a degree of accuracy, as to enable us to use them within certain limits, as a musical thermometer. In my observations I used a very ordinary thermometer to mark the weather, and a German flute, which is an inaccurate instrument for such a purpose, to mark the musical key of the insects. Some allowance, therefore, ought to be made for any little incorrectness which a future observer may detect in these results. I will venture to assert, however, that the result of any future experiments of this kind would not differ, materially, from that of the following table:—

Height of Thermometer.	Key-note of the Insects.
80°	F natural, perfect time and tune.
75°	E flat, “ “ “
70°	D, “ “ “
65°	C, imperfect time and tune.
60°	B flat, “ “ “
55°	A, key-note hardly to be detected, many out of time and tune.
50°	G, a few individuals only singing slowly and feebly.

XXX.

THE FLOWERS OF AUTUMN.

THE student of nature, who is accustomed to general observation, cannot fail to have noticed the different character of the flowers of spring, summer, and autumn. Each season, as well as climate, has a description of vegetation peculiar to itself; for as spring is not destitute of fruits, neither is autumn of flowers, though they have in general but little resemblance to one another. Those of spring, as I have already remarked, are delicate and herbaceous, pale in their tints, and fragrant in their odors. The summer flowers are larger, more brilliant in their colors and not so highly perfumed as those of spring. Lastly, the flowers of autumn appear in unlimited profusion, neither so brilliant as the former, nor so delicate as the latter. They are produced on woody stalks, often in crowded clusters, and nearly destitute of fragrance. The differences in the general characteristics of the flowers of different seasons are an interesting theme of speculation; and they represent, somewhat imperfectly, the flowers of the different latitudes. The flowers of the higher latitudes resemble those of spring, of the temperate zone those of summer, and the flowers of the tropics those of early autumn.

The summer flowers are in their greatest splendor in the latter part of June. The greater number of those which commence their flowering in August are autumnal flowers, and do not acquire their full maturity until September. The summer flowers are characterized by their large size and brilliant colors, and combine the two qualities of delicacy and splendor in a greater degree than those of any other season. Such are the different species of the beautiful orchis tribe, the cardinal flower, the cymbidium, the arethusas, and some of the wild lilies. The majority of the flowering shrubs put out their blossoms in early summer, just after the blossoming of the fruit-trees. These diminish in number as the summer advances, and in autumn hardly one is to be found that is not loaded with seeds or fruit. The flowering plants of autumn, however, though not shrubs, are woody in their texture, and many are, in fact, a kind of annual shrubbery.

The summer flowers may be said to date their commencement with the elegant Canadian rhodora, and to end with the alder-leaved clethra, a flowering shrub very common in our swamps, bearing long slender spikes of white blossoms, which have the odor of lilacs. During this interval, the most beautiful flowering shrubs of our climate unfold their blossoms. The rhodora is followed in succession by the honeysuckles, the kalmias, or false laurels, the azaleas, the viburnums, and many others not less important as ornaments of our native landscape. The flowering of the alder-leaved clethra, marks the decline of summer. After this, the remainder of the month of August is a period rather barren of wild flowers. The most of those which are peculiar to summer, have faded, and the autumnal tribes are still ripening their buds. There seems to be a short

suspension during this month, of the efforts of nature, while she is preparing to unfold the brilliant treasures of autumn.

The spring produces in the greatest abundance those flowers that affect a northern latitude. As the season advances we find more of those tribes which are peculiar to warm climates. The roses and rosaceous flowers usually appear in the early summer weeks, and the flowers of these genera are rare in tropical regions, being the denizens chiefly of temperate latitudes. The papilionaceous flowers, of which the greater numbers of species are found within the tropics, do not appear with us in profusion until the latter part of summer. The prevailing hues of the summer flowers are the different shades of scarlet, crimson, and purple, which become paler as the days decrease in length and the temperature becomes cooler. Thus the bulbous *arethusa*, that flowers in June, is of a brilliant purple or crimson; while the adder's-tongue *arethusa*, that appears a month later, is of a pale lilac. The brightest tints of our native species belong to the summer flowers. Such are the scarlet *lobelia*, the narrow-leaved *kalmia*, the red lily, and the swamp rose.

With August commences a kind of vegetation unlike any that has preceded it. The compound flowers, a very extensive tribe, begin to be conspicuous. These flowers are characteristic of vegetation in the autumn, the greater part of them coming to perfection during this season, commencing with a few species in the month of August. All these increase in beauty and variety until September arrives, bearing superb garlands of asters, sunflowers, and golden-rods, which, though exceeded in delicacy and brilliancy by the earlier flowers, are unsurpassed in splendor. The season of the

autumnal flowers may be dated as commencing with the flowering of the trumpet weed, or purple eupatorium. This is one of the most conspicuous plants in our wet meadows, during the early part of September. It often grows perfectly straight to the height of six feet, in a favorable soil, bearing at regular distances around its cylindrical stem, a whorl of leaves, which by their peculiar curvature give the plant a fancied resemblance to a trumpet. Soon after this appear the yellow gerardias, bringing along with them countless multitudes of asters, golden-rods, and autumnal dandelions, until the uplands are universally spangled with them, and gleam with a profusion of blossoms unwitnessed at any other season.

The asters are the most remarkable of the flowers of autumn, and are, in many respects, characteristic of them. Their stalks are woody—but they are not shrubs, and their flowers are more delicate than brilliant. The foreign asters which are cultivated in our gardens, though exceeding the native species in the brilliancy of their hues, are inferior to the latter in elegance of growth, and in the delicate structure of their blossoms. The prevailing color of the autumnal flowers is yellow; yet there is not a single yellow aster among their whole extensive tribe. Near the latter part of September, the fields are covered with asters of every shade, from the deep blue of the cyaneus and the purple of the New England aster, to the purest white. The walls and the edges of the woods are bordered with long rows of golden-rods, and multitudes of gaudy flowers have usurped the dominion of the roses, hiding the summer shrubbery beneath their tall and spreading herbage.

In the latter part of autumn some of the flowers bear a resemblance to those of spring. Such are the

neottia which continues in flower until November, and the purple gerardia, which bears no resemblance to the other flowers of autumn. Almost simultaneously with the tinting of the forest trees comes forth the last beautiful visitant of our fields, the blue-fringed gentian. This little flower marks the decline of autumnal vegetation. It begins to unfold itself during the latter part of September, and may often be found in the meadows after the November frosts have seared the verdure of the fields, and changed the variegated hues of the forest into one monotonous tinge of brown and purple.

When the woods are completely divested of their foliage, and the landscape wants nothing but snow to yield it the aspect of winter, the hamamelis, or witch-hazel, still retains its yellow blossoms, in defiance of the later frosts. Nothing is lively around it but the evergreens, and no plant puts forth its blossoms after this, unless some flower of spring should peep out unseasonably from under the protection of some sunny knoll. The evergreens are now in all their beauty, and we search the fields in vain for aught but the presages of winter.

XXXI.

OCTOBER.



THE cool and temperate breezes that prevail at this time almost constantly from the west, attended with a clear atmosphere, denote the arrival of the brilliant month of October, with its climate that alternately chills the frame with frosty vapors by night, and enlivens the heart with beauty and sunshine by day. At sunrise and sundown, the villagers are gathered round their fires, shivering with the cold ; the chirping insects have also crept into their shelters and are silent. But ere the sun has gained half his meridian height, the villagers have forsaken their fires, and are busy in the orchards beneath the glowing sunshine ; and the insects aroused from their torpor, and warmed into new life, have again commenced their chirping as merrily as in August. A multitude of winged insects that could hardly creep with torpor in the morning, are now darting and spinning among the variegated herbage of the meadows, and the crickets are again singing their peculiar monotonous songs among the grassy knolls.

There are occasionally dull and cloudy days in October, the dreary precursors of approaching winter ; but

the most of them are bright and clear, and unequalled by those of any other period in exhilarating salubrity. There are no sleeping mists drawn over the skies to obscure the transparency of the atmosphere; but far as the eye can reach, the distant hills lift up their heads with a clear unclouded outline, and the blue arch of heaven preserves its pure azure, down almost to the bounds of the horizon. In the mornings of such days a white fleecy cloud is settled upon the streams and lowlands, in which the early sunbeams are refracted with all the myriad hues of dawn, forming halos and imperfect rainbows, that seem to be pictured on a groundwork of drifted snow. By this vapor, nearly motionless at sunrise, we may trace the winding course of the small rivers, far along through the distant prospect. But the sun quickly dissipates this fleecy cloud. As the winds float it slowly and gracefully over the plains, it melts into transparency; and ere the sun has gained ten degrees in his orbit, the last feathery fragment has vanished, and left him in the clear blue firmament, to pursue the remainder of his career, without one shadow to tarnish his glory.

October is one of the most brilliant of the months, unsurpassed in the clearness of its skies, and in the wonderful variety of tints which are sprinkled over all vegetation. He who has an eye and a taste for beautiful colors, must ever admire the scenery of this last month of foliage and flowers. As nature loses the delicacy of her charms, she is more lavish of the gaudy decorations, with which she embroiders her apparel. While she appears before us in her living attire, from the early spring to the late autumn, she is constantly changing her vesture with each revolving month. The flowers that spangle the green turf, or wreath them-

selves upon the trees and vines, and the green herbage with all its various shades of verdure, constitute, with their successive changes, her spring and summer adornment; but ere the fall of the leaf, she makes herself garlands of the withering foliage, and crowns the brows of her mountains and the bosoms of her forests in the most beautiful array.

Though the present is a melancholy time of the year, we are preserved from cheerless reflections, by the brightness of the sunshine and the interminable beauty of the landscape. The sky in clear weather, is of the deepest blue; and the ocean and the lakes, slightly ruffled by the fluttering October winds, which are seldom tranquil, acquire a peculiar depth of coloring, unwitnessed when their surface is calm. Diverted by the unusual charms of nature, while we look with a mournful heart upon the graves of the flowers, we involuntarily turn our eyes upward and around us, where the woods are gleaming like a wilderness of roses, and forget in our ravishment, the lovely things we have lost. As the flowers wither and vanish from our sight, their colors seem to revive in the foliage of the trees, as if each dying blossom had bequeathed its beauty to the forest boughs, that had kindly protected it from wind and blast. The trees are one by one putting aside their vesture of green, and slowly assuming their new robe of many hues. From the beginning to the end of the month, the landscape suffers a complete metamorphosis; and October may be said to represent in the successive changes of its aspect, all the floral magnificence of summer.

Notwithstanding the late frosts, the grass is still green from the valleys to the hill-tops, and many a flower is still smiling upon us, as if there were no winter in the year. Many fair ones still linger in their cheer-

ful but faded bowers, the emblems of contentment, seeming perfectly happy, if they can but greet a few beams of sunshine to temper the frosty gales. In wet places I still behold the lovely neottia, with its small white flowers, arranged in a spiral line about their stem, and giving out the delicate incense of a fresh-blown lily. The purple gerardia, too, has not yet forsaken us; and the gentians, and the golden coreopsis will wait to welcome the next month before they wholly leave our borders.

If we quit the fields we find in the gardens a profusion of lively exotics. Dablias, china-asters, and numerous other plants that were created for the embellishment of other climes, are rewarding the hands that cherished them with their fairest forms and hues. All these are destined, not like the flowers of our own clime, to bloom throughout their natural period, and then sink quietly into decay; but they are cut down by frosts in the very summer of their loveliness. Already are their leaves withered and blackened, while the native plants, in defiance of the frost, grow brighter and brighter with every new morning, until they are finally seared by the icy breath of November.

But to the forests we must look, to behold the fairest spectacle of the season, now glowing with the infinitely varied and constantly multiplying tints of a summer sunset. The first changes appear in the low grounds, where vegetation is exposed to the earliest blights, and is prematurely ripened by the alternation of chill dews and sunshine. Very early in the season, we behold these tints scattered among the glossy green leaves of the tupelo-tree, giving to those which have received the tinge, the appearance of scarlet blossoms intermingled with the foliage. But the maples assume a more rapid

transformation. Sometimes in the space of one night, a whole tree will suddenly, as if by enchantment, put off its green robe and appear in a full garb of crimson. The leaves are suddenly metamorphosed into flowers, as if the dew-drops brought with them the hues of the beautiful clouds from which they fell. But while some trees are thoroughly changed in their appearance, others are only impurpled with a delicate shade of red, or slightly tinged with orange or russet; for nature, while decorating some in one uniform color, scatters over the remainder a gentle sprinkling of every hue.

It is my delight, during all this month, to ramble in the field and by the wood side, to take note of these changes, as they happen by day. Every morning as it arrives, witnesses a new aspect in the face of nature, like each passing moment that attends the brightening and fading of the evening sky. The landscape we visited but yesterday, seems to-day like a different prospect, save in the arrangement of the grounds. Beauty has suddenly awoken upon the face of a dull and homely wood, and variety has sprung up in the midst of tiresome uniformity. There are patches of brightly tinted shrubbery, that seem to have risen, during the night, from the bed of the earth, where yesterday there was but a dull uniform green; and when surrounded by the unfaded grasses, they resemble little flower plats, imbosomed in verdure. As the month advances, one tree after another partakes of this beautiful transformation. No two trees exhibit the same combinations of tints; but all the varieties of red, yellow, and purple are resplendent from the different species. It seems as if the departed flowers of summer had revisited the earth, and were wreathing their congregated gar-

lands around the brows of the woods and the mountains.

In the early part of the month, the most of the trees are still green in the uplands, but not brightly green as in summer. Their verdure is faded and rusty, and in some it is even darker than it was during the health and vigor of the foliage. But it is a sombre complexion produced by age, and not a deeper green. The ash-tree grows darker, by receiving a deep mulberry shade, mingled almost imperceptibly with the greenness of the leaf. This tint gradually brightens, into a brownish lilac, with a peculiar transparency, and soon the leaves, after fading into yellow, rapidly fall from the tree. The leaves of several species of the oak partake of a deeper shade, just before they assume the purple and chocolate hues that precede their decay. Though many trees are marked by a variety of shades, there is always in the foliage of the same tree a predominance of one color. The maples exhibit the different reds and yellows, from orange and vermilion, through every gradation of scarlet and crimson, while the willows, elms, and birches are dyed with the various shades of olive, yellow, and russet. The aspens, too, present a mixture of green and yellow, and their tinted leaves, as they tremble in the wind, resemble a multitude of golden butterflies, fluttering and sporting among their branches. While contemplating this gorgeous scene of splendor, our eyes are attracted towards an occasional towering evergreen, that stands alone among the glittering multitude, unshorn of its verdure, like some proud spirit, that scorns the fashions of the world.

On every side of our walk, various plats of herbage gleam upon our sight, each with one unmingled shade

of some lively hue ; and every shrub and every leafy herb presents the appearance of a scattered variety of bouquets, wreaths, and floral embroidery. It would seem as if the wood-nymphs, while fleeing from northern gales, in quest of summer groves, had left their robes upon the beds of the flowers, to protect them from the blasts of winter. The farms in the lowlands exhibit wide fields of intermingled orange and russet, and the shrubs of different colors that spring up among them in tufts and knolls, add to the spectacle an endless variety of splendor. The creeping herbs and trailing vines, some of which are still begemmed with fruit, exhibit the same variety of tinting, as if designed for wreaths to garland the gray rocks, and to yield a smile to the face of nature, that shall make glad the heart of the solitary Rambler, who is ready to weep over the fair objects that have fled.

Day and night have, at length, about equally divided the light and the darkness. The time of the latter harvest is nearly past, and the winter fruits are mostly gathered and stored into barns. The mornings and evenings are cool and cheerless, and the west wind has grown harsh and uncomfortable. The bland weather of early autumn is rapidly gliding from our year. Night is continually encroaching upon the dominion of day. The white frosts already glitter in the arbors of the summer dews, and the cold north wind is whistling rudely in the haunts of the sweet summer zephyrs. The scents of fading leaves, and of the ripened harvest, have driven out the delicate incense of the flowers, whose fragrant offerings have all ascended to heaven. Dark threatening clouds occasionally frown upon us, as they gather for a few hours about the horizon, the melancholy omens of the coming of winter.

But there is pleasantness still in a rural excursion, and when the cold mists of dawn have passed away, and the hoarfrost has melted in the warm sunshine, it is my delight to go forth into the fields, to take note of the last beautiful things of summer vegetation, that linger in the threshold of autumn.

XXXII.

CLOUDS.



THE sky would present very little in the daytime, to charm the sight or interest the mind, if it were destitute of clouds. From these proceed all the beautiful tints of sunrise and sunset, the rainbow, and the various configurations that deck the arches of the firmament. The different forms and colors they assume in their progress through the atmosphere, and their ever varying positions and combinations are capable of awakening the most agreeable emotions of beauty and sublimity. I shall not speak of the scientific arrangements of clouds. The classifications of natural objects are necessary to the progress of science, to enable the mind to grasp all their species, and to understand their differences and their relations. But these artificial systems have done more than any vulgar prejudice to render the study of nature unpopular. The immense vocabulary of terms presented to the mind of the young student, gives him a magnified sense of the task he must perform, at the very threshold of nature's temple, that discourages him, and deters him from entering within it. I shall simply treat of clouds as they appear to the eyes and the mind of a person of sensibility and fancy.

The greatest painters have delighted in the representation of clouds, knowing that there is no landscape that may not be improved by their celestial forms and tints, and that a scene representing any passion or situation may be heightened by such accompaniments, harmonizing with the cheerfulness or the sadness, with the lowliness or magnificence of the subject. Poets have ever been mindful of the same effects; and the Hebrew prophets have exalted the sublimity of their descriptions, and increased the efficacy of their prophecies and their admonitions, by employing imagery derived from these appearances, rightly deeming the scenery of the heavens the most proper to illustrate their sacred themes, and the divine attributes of the Deity. Hence the Lord, who set his bow in a cloud as the token of a covenant between him and the earth, is represented as making the clouds his chariot and his pavilion when ascending to heaven, or when descending to earth to speak to the messengers of his will.

I am at a loss whether to attribute the peculiar pleasure that attends us, on a sight of the varied forms and hues of clouds, to the physical effect of light and colors upon the sensorium, or to mental association. It is certain that no spectacle in nature produces so intense an emotion of cheerfulness and sublimity. The latter emotion is most commonly excited by sombre scenes, added to something that affects one with a certain amount of terror, while he retains a consciousness of security. But when the western clouds, piled in glittering arches one above another, and widening as they recede from the great source of light, exhibit their several gradations of hues, from the outermost arch, successively, of violet, purple, crimson, vermilion, and orange, until the eyes are dazzled by the golden radi-

ance that beams from the throne of day, the mind is affected with an emotion of sublimity, unallied with terror, and accompanied with the most cheerful exaltation.

Every scene in the universe is attended, when we behold it, by a peculiar and specific sensation. Our emotions are as nearly infinite as our thoughts; and nature provides an infinite variety of scenes to harmonize with all, that no existing susceptibility to pleasure shall be lost, for the want of something external to act upon it, and render it available as a source of happiness. The human countenance is not more varied in its expressions than the face of nature. There are beams in the countenance of morn and even, capable of irradiating into our souls a feeling of intense delight; and it is no marvel that nature should seem, as the poets have described her, to smile upon us in the sunshine that sparkles in the morning dews, and gilds the evening sky, or in the moonlight that reveals to us a new firmament of wonders among the silvery clouds of night. The forms and tints of the clouds produce effects upon the mind that vary with the hour of the day. In the morning there is a feeling of hopefulness attending the spectacle of the constantly increasing splendor of the clouds, commencing with the dark purple tints of dawn, and widening with beautiful radiating undulations, through their whole succession of hues, into perfect day. As we are prepared by the buoyant feelings that come from the spectacle of dawn, to enter with a glad heart upon the duties of the day, we are equally inspired by the spectacle of sunset, with a sentiment of tranquillity, that prepares us for sound and healthful repose.

It is not difficult to understand that if the sun rose

clearly into the blue heavens, without any changes except from darkness to light, through all the degrees of twilight, the charms of the morning would be greatly diminished. But nature, that all hearts might be enamoured of the morn, has wreathed her temples with dappled crimson, and animated her countenance with those milder glories, that so well become the fair daughter of the dawn and the gentle mother of dews. In ancient fable Aurora is a beautiful nymph, who blushes when she first enters into the presence of Day; and the clouds are the fabric with which she veils her features at his approach. But a young person of sensibility needs no such allegories, to inspire his mind with a sense of the incomparable beauty and grandeur of the orient, at the break of day. It is associated with some of the happiest moments of his life; and the exhilarated feelings, amounting almost to transport, with which we look upon the dayspring in the east, are probably one cause of the tonic and healthful influence of early rising.

Many theories have at different times been advanced to explain the cause of the varying tints of the clouds; but it is at length conceded that they receive and reflect the sun's rays as they are changed by passing through the atmosphere, and that their tints are owing to no peculiar refrangibility of the globules of vapor. As the sun declines and sinks below the horizon, the whole surrounding medium passes through the same series of tints which are seen in the clouds. Were a snowy mountain situated directly before our eyes, we should see the graduated tints of yellow and orange at the summit, deepening into crimson and purple in the middle, and fading into dusky twilight at the base of the mountain. Hence in winter, when the sky is per-

fectly clear, and the atmosphere purely transparent, the snow that covers the roofs of the houses, and the tops of the hills, is more or less gilded and crimsoned by the rays of the declining sun.

The forms of clouds are not less beautiful or expressive than their colors. While their outlines are sufficiently indefinite for picturesque effects, they often assume a great uniformity in their aggregations. The frostwork upon the window panes, on cold winter mornings, exhibits no greater variety of figures than that assumed by the clouds in their distribution over the heavens. Beginning in the form of vapor that rolls its fleecy masses slowly over the plain, resembling, at a distance, sometimes a smooth sheet of water, and at other times a drifted snow bank, the cloud divides itself as it ascends, into heaps of globular figures, that reflect the sunlight from a thousand silvery domes. These, after gradually dissolving, reappear in a host of finely mottled images, resembling the scales of a fish, then marshal themselves into undulating rows like the waves of the sea, and are lastly metamorphosed into a thin gauzy fabric, like crumpled muslin, or in a long drapery of hair-like fringe overspreading the highest regions of the atmosphere.

These different forms of cloud are elevated according to the fineness of their texture and organization, the finer and more complicated fabrics occupying the space above the next in degree. We often observe three layers of clouds separated by sufficient space to receive all the different hues of sunset at the same moment. While the feather clouds, that occupy the greatest elevation, are burnished with a dazzling radiance, the middle layers of dappled cloud will be tipped with crimson, while the violet and indigo hues prevail in the

dense, unorganized mass that is spread out below. It may be remarked, both of the forms and hues of clouds, that nature permits no harsh contrasts or sudden transitions. The different hues are laid softly one above another, melting into each other like those in the plumage of a bird of paradise. You can never see where one hue terminates and another commences. It is the same, in a less degree, with their forms, that never, for two minutes in succession, remain unaltered. They exhibit a pleasing irregularity, and are almost destitute of outlines, so that the imagination is left to carve out of their obscure figures and arrangements, aerial landscapes, bright sunny valleys, and waving plains, with villages surrounded by turrets and the pinnacles of mountains.

The imagination is always stimulated by a certain degree of obscurity in the objects of sight and sound, as well as of thought. The sublime passages of the poets are often obscure, suggestive of something that produces a well-defined emotion, but no distinct image to the understanding. It is this quality that gives their power to certain remarkable passages in the Hebrew prophets. In a terrestrial landscape, when viewed by daylight, the outlines of objects, except at a distance, are so distinct that we can see and easily describe their forms and character. Distant objects have a dimness of outline, and a misty obscurity, which are favorable to an expression of sublimity. In the darkness of night the forms of trees exhibit the indefinite shapes of clouds, and the imagination is free to indulge its caprices, while, as we pass by them in a journey or a ramble, the eyes are watching their apparent motions and changes of form.

By no scenes in nature, therefore, is the imagination

so powerfully excited as by these celestial phenomena, whether we imagine the gates of heaven to be opened beneath the triumphal arches of sunset, or watch the passing of the gloomy precursors of evil days, in the dark irregular masses that deform the sky before a storm. The picturesque effects of clouds are in a great measure attributable to the dubious character of their configurations, giving rise to peculiar fancies, and awakening sentiments suggested only by the loftiest images of poetry. The shadows of passing clouds, as they fall upon the earth, often moving rapidly with the wind, are circumstances that add greatly to their expression. Above all do their motions contribute to the beauty of landscape, when, through some opening in their dense masses while the greater part of the prospect is enveloped in shade, the sun pours a full stream of glory upon a distant grove, village, or range of hills.

The system of the universe is attended with so many circumstances that mar our happiness, that the Author of nature has benevolently spread every scene with beauty, that shall serve, by its exhilarating influence, to lift us above the physical evils that surround us, and render us half unmindful of their presence. For this reason beauty is made to spring up, not only in the landscape, in the wilderness, and by the way-side, by the sea-shore and the inland valley; but it is spread in the most gorgeous spectacles upon the heavens, in the infinitely varied forms and arrangements of clouds, and in their equally beautiful lights, shades, and colors. Hence the man of cultivated sentiment, who takes pleasure in surveying the beauties of a terrestrial landscape, feels no less delight in contemplating the scenery of the heavens. Every morning, noon, and evening,

afford him scenes always charming and never tiresome, fraught with lessons of divine wisdom and benevolence, never heard from the lips of man, and read only in the works of him who silently shows forth his wonders in the landscape and the firmament.

As the most delightful views of the ocean are obtained when a small part of it is seen through a green recess in a wood, for the same reason, the blue sky is never so beautiful as when seen through the openings of clouds. The emotion produced by any scene whatever is always more intense, when the greater part of the object is hidden, leaving room for the entrance of fanciful images into the mind. Clouds are peculiarly suggestive on account of the ambiguity of their shapes, and their constant changes of form and arrangement. No person can look at their radiant groups, if he possess any liveliness of fancy, without indulging a variety of poetic vagaries. Nothing, indeed, in nature so closely resembles the mysterious operations of thought, ever ceaseless in their motions, and ever varying in their combinations; now passing from a shapeless heap into a finely marshalled band, then dissolving into the pellucid atmosphere, as a series of thoughts will pass away from our memory; then slowly forming themselves again, and recombining in a still more beautiful and dazzling congeries, in another part of the sky; now gloomy, changeable, and formless, then assuming a definite shape, and glowing with the most lovely beams of light and beauty; and lastly, fading into darkness when the sun departs, as the mind for a short period becomes obliterated in sleep.

Perhaps not every one has observed, that in the evening after the hues of the clouds have once faded, they are often reilluminated before darkness comes on. Im-

mediately after sunset, the clouds that surround the western horizon have no remarkable tints, the body of them being of a dark gray, or ash color, having their edges tipped with white. As the sun retires below the hemisphere, the gray portion of the clouds becomes brown or auburn, and the silvery edges of a yellow or golden hue. While the auburn is gradually changing into purple, the yellows deepen into orange and vermilion. Every tint is constantly changing into a deeper one, until the sky is decorated with every imaginable color, excepting green and blue. The two last are ingredients in some of the compound hues, but they are never seen in their purity. When these colors have attained their maximum of splendor, they gradually fade away, until the body of each cloud has turned to a dull iron gray, and every gorgeous tint has vanished. The spectator then supposes that all this scene of glory is ended. After a few minutes, however, the clouds begin once more to brighten, the whole picture is gradually reilluminated and passes through another gradation of more sombre tints, consisting of olive, lilac, and bronze, or some of their shades. The second illumination is not so bright or so beautiful as the first; but I have known the light that falls upon the earth to be sensibly increased by this reillumination, without any diminution of the mass of clouds.

It is difficult to explain the source of those highly pleasurable emotions with which we contemplate the tints of the morning and evening sky. No man can look at them without being convinced that there is intrinsic beauty in colors; though it is the opinion of some philosophers that even the sensations that spring from the sight of colors arise from their expression.

There are unnumbered mysterious sources from which our ideas and sentiments are obtained; and the capacity of any thing in nature to produce a pleasing or a displeasing thought or sentiment, constitutes the expression of that object. As light produces cheerfulness, and darkness gloom, it may be that all the different colors have a similar natural association with some certain mood of mind, and are capable of arousing certain trains of thought which may lead to some definite ideas and images. Nature, who creates nothing in vain, and who, by the songs of birds, inspires the human heart with the sentiment of adoration, may, by this spectacle of empyrean beauty, lift the mind above a purely sensual philosophy, to the contemplation of that infinite wisdom that pervades the universe.

Men of the world may praise the effects of certain medical excitants that serve, by benumbing the outward senses, to exalt the soul into reveries of bliss and untried exercises of thought. But the only truly divine exhilaration proceeds from contemplating the beautiful and sublime scenes of nature, as beheld on the face of the earth and the heavens. It is under this vast canopy of celestial splendors, more than in any other situation, that the faculties may become inspired, without madness, and exalted without subsequent depression. I never believe so much in the immortality of the soul as when, at sunset, I look through a long vista of luminous clouds, far down into that mystic region of light in which, we are fain to imagine, are deposited the secrets of the universe. I cannot believe that all this panorama of unimaginable loveliness, which is spread out over earth, sea, and sky, is without some moral signification. The blue heavens are the

page whereon nature has revealed some pleasant intimations of the mysteries of a more spiritual existence; and no charming vision of heaven and immortality ever entered the human soul, but the Deity responded to it upon the firmament, in letters of gold, ruby, and sapphire.

XXXIII.

WATER SCENERY.

THERE is no single thing in nature that adds more beauty to landscape than water. It is emblematical of purity and tranquillity ; it is suggestive of multitudes of pleasant rural images, and, besides these moral expressions, it possesses a great deal of intrinsic beauty. The mirrored surface of a lake or a stream, reflecting the hues and forms of the clouds in the heavens, and of the trees and shrubbery on its banks, is pleasing to the eye, independently of any suggestion that may occur to a fanciful mind. The eye requires to be practised, or rather the mind must be educated in a certain manner, before it can enjoy and appreciate moral beauty. But the beauty of a smooth surface of water, of waves trembling in the moonlight, of a spouting fountain, or a sparkling rill, is obvious and attractive even to a child. In water have color and form and motion intimately combined their charms, assuming the loveliest tints in the dews of heaven and the spray of the ocean, and every imaginable form of beauty in the lake and its sinuosities, and the river in its various windings through vale and mountain.

Water is not only beautiful in itself ; but it is one of

the chief sources of pleasing variety in the expression of landscape, whether we view it as spread out on the silver bosom of a lake, the serpentine course of a river, or by its outlines forming those endless changes, that delight the voyager by the sea-shore. Every one must have observed, when riding through an unattractive country, how it seems overspread with a sudden charm, when we come in sight of a lake or a stream. What was before monotonous is now agreeably varied ; what before was spiritless is now animated and cheering. A similar effect is produced by the sight of a little cottage in a desert or uninhabited region, or in the midst of an uncultivated plain. The eye wanders about unsatisfied, until it sees this human dwelling, when it rests contented, because it has found something to fix the attention and to awaken a sympathetic interest. We are not always aware how greatly the beauty of landscape is founded on our habitual associations. At the sight of water we think at once of the numerous delights, bounties, and luxuries, that flow from its beneficent streams ; and perhaps nothing in a prospect so instantaneously awakens the idea of plenty, and of the beneficence of nature. Water is, therefore, the very picture of benevolence, without which the face of the country would seem cold, ungenerous, and barren.

A feeling of seclusion is one of the agreeable emotions connected with a ramble in the woods ; and some delightful spots derive their principal attractions from their evident adaptedness to this security from observation. When we are walking either alone or in company, we do not like to be met by others, or to be observed by them. A little sequestered spot, that seems to offer all this desirable shelter from the eyes of the world, is always singularly attractive. But those are

the most eligible retreats in which one might be secluded, and at the same time accommodated with a pleasant and extensive prospect. To be able to look out upon the world from a little nook, while unobserved and not liable to be interrupted by others, affords one an experience of the same emotion with which we contemplate the raging of a storm, from a place of comfort and security.

Water is in a high degree favorable to the attainment of these pleasant advantages. Let two parties be placed in opposite points, with a small lake intervening, and though full in sight of one another, they still feel secluded. The pleasantness of their retreat, under these circumstances, is enlivened by the sight of the opposite party, who may be amused by observing one another's motions, and at the same time feel secure from intrusion. But if there were only a meadow of equal width to separate them, the secluded character of the situation would be lost; as the parties are not only in sight of one another, but are liable to be interrupted by a visit from the opposite one. A lake may in this way be the occasion of many of those delightful retreats, attended with advantages of prospect, which no other combination of scenes could so well afford. The beauty of many of these situations depends greatly on their apparent adaptedness to this kind of recreation and seclusion.

A river, especially of moderate width, is in many respects more beautiful than a lake; and more than any other collection of water suggests the idea of infinity and of continued progression. I never look upon a clear stream of narrow dimensions, without thinking of the thousand beautiful scenes it must visit, in its blue course through the hills and plains. What a life of

perpetual delight must be led by the gentle river goddess, as she is wafted up and down the stream in her shallop of reeds! Now coursing along under banks sprinkled all over with honeysuckles, while their fragrance follows the current of the stream, to entice the bees and other insects to their fragrant flower-cups; then passing through a pleasant forest where she is regaled by the terebinthine odor of pines mingled with that of flowering lindens, whose branches resound all day with the hum of insects and the warbling of birds; every green bank offers to her hand a profusion of wild strawberries, and every rocky declivity hangs its brambles over the stream, and tempts her with delicate clusters of raspberries, and other delicious fruits. How, if she takes pleasure in the happiness of human beings, must she be charmed by witnessing the plenty which is everywhere diffused by the crystal waters of her own stream; the countless farms rendered fertile and productive through its agency; the numerous mill seats that derive their power from its falls and rapids, and gather the industrious inhabitants in smiling hamlets upon its banks! A river, when pursuing its winding course along the plain, alternately appearing and disappearing among the hills and woods, suggests the idea of a pleasant journey, and is peculiarly emblematical of human progress. It always seems to me that it must conduct one to some happier region, and that if I traced it to its source, I should be led into the very temple of the Naiads!

With the different forms of water are associated nearly all the pleasant images of rural life. To one who is tired of his busy employments in the city, a rural retreat is like a cool breeze to the traveller in a sultry desert. A little arbor, that overlooks a river, a

lake, or an arm of the sea, derives its charms almost wholly from the water, which is at the same time the symbol of peace and plenty, and the mirror of heaven. A hermitage by the side of a stream affords a secret retreat, still more delightful from its fancied association with pious seclusion from the world. Every flower that looks up to us from the green, mossy turf; every bird that warbles in the neighboring copse, and every insect that hums in the herbage at our feet, has a soothing influence, that for a season dispels every care, and every feverish excitement. Then do we feel that nature only has power to administer that solace which is balm to the soul, when one is vexed with care and weary of men.

One of the sentiments often awakened by a water prospect, is that of sublimity. But this can only arise from an extensive view of the ocean or of a cataract. Ordinarily, therefore, except by the sea-shore, we seldom behold a sufficient expanse of water to affect us with a sentiment of grandeur. This influence is greater when a wide sea-view comes suddenly upon the eye, after one has passed through a succession of beautiful, quiet, and rather confined scenes. Small lakes and rivers greatly enhance the beauty of a pastoral landscape, because they afford the best evidence of good pasturage as well as of a plentiful supply of water to the flocks and grazing herds. Painters, taking advantage of this expression, often represent in one of their side views, the cattle standing up to their knees in a little pond of water, while the green rushes and undecayed shrubbery growing about them make manifest its clearness and purity. Ocean scenery is not favorable to pastoral expression; but it enhances the beauty of sunrise, and adds grandeur to the sublimity of a tempest.

Many writers have eulogized an ocean prospect, as beheld from a point where we can see no land. The views presented by the ocean, from different points on the shore, which is broken and intersected by frequent inlets of water, we can never cease to admire; but I have little sympathy with these lovers of boundless space. The eye soon tires of gazing upon a scene that awakens no other emotion but that of infinity, and presents no point as a resting-place for the imagination. To the sublimity of an ocean voyage, with its mountainous waves and its interminable azure, I prefer a boat excursion on a narrow stream, where the trees on the opposite banks frequently interlace their branches over the middle of the current, and the plashing of the oar often startles the little twittering sandpiper that is feeding upon the edge of the stream. The sight of a small lake surrounded by woods, and dotted all round its borders with full-blown water-lilies, over whose broadspread leaves the little plover glides, without impressing a ripple on the glossy brink, gives me more pleasure than I could derive from any view of the ocean, bounded only by the horizon.

Water needs the accompaniment of field and wood to form a picture that is agreeable to the eye. Without such adjuncts, it is like the sky when it has no clouds, and is void of all pleasing suggestions. The pleasure of angling on the banks of a river or a lake, is greatly magnified by the prospect of the agreeable combination of wood and water scenery that surrounds us. The beauty of an island is like that of a lake; and it is hard to say which of the two affects the spectator with the most delight, though I am inclined to believe that the majority would decide in favor of the island. The island, especially if there be a little

cottage upon it, is suggestive of a multitude of pleasing fancies connected with rural life and retirement. In this case, we think not so much of the difficulty of gaining access to town, or even of coming on shore, as of the peaceful seclusion it seems calculated to afford. The lake suggests no such ideas; it is chiefly attractive by its own beautiful sheen of crystal water, by its association with boat excursions on serene afternoons or moonlight evenings, and with rural pleasures connected with the scenes on its shore.

.

XXXIV.

NOVEMBER.

A CHANGE has lately come over the face of nature; the bright garniture of the woods and pastures has faded; the fall of the leaf has arrived, and the sun gleams brightly through the naked branches of the trees, into the late dark recesses of the forest. In some years the leaves of the trees remain unseared by frost, until November has tarried with us many days. It is then melancholy to observe the complete change, that will suddenly take place in the aspect of the woods, after the first wintry night. The longer this fatal blast is deferred, the more sudden and manifest are its effects. The fields to-day may be glowing in the fairest hues of autumnal splendor. One night passes away;—a night of still, freezing cold, depositing a dense and beautiful frostwork on the windows—and lo! a complete robe of monotonous brown covers the wide forest, and all its variegated colors have vanished. After this frost, the leaves fall rapidly from the trees; and the first vigorous wind will completely disrobe them of their foliage.

This change, however, is usually more gradual. Slight frosts occur, one after another, during many successive nights, each adding a browner tint to the

foliage, and causing the different trees to shed their leaves in natural succession. Though November is the time of the true fall of the leaf, yet many trees cast off their vesture in October; but some of the oaks usually retain their brown, rustling foliage during the whole of the winter; and many are the birds that find beneath them a comfortable shelter from the storm. The willows and many of the fruit-trees retain their verdure to a late period in the autumn, and shed their leaves only upon the arrival of winter. In the low grounds, there is little foliage to be seen after the middle of October. At that time, if we stand on a moderate elevation, commanding a view of hill, valley, and plain, we may observe the naked and desolate aspect of winter in the swamps, where the frosts make their earliest visit; while on the uplands and hill-sides, the woods are still in almost full foliage.

The flowering season closed with the last month; yet sometimes after a spell of mild weather, especially after a drought, a few spring flowers will appear, and we observe a second blossoming of some of the boughs in the orchards. A few asters are still seen in the woods, and here and there, on the green southern slopes, a violet looks upon you with its mild blue eye, like a star of promise, to remind us of the beauties of the next reviving spring. There is a kind of melancholy pleasure attending a ramble at this time, among the fading woods and pastures, while we take notice of the changes of the season, and of the care with which nature provides for the preservation of her charge, during the coming season of cold. All sounds that meet the ear are in harmony with our feelings. The breezes murmur with a plaintive moan, while shaking the dropping leaves from the trees, as if they felt a sympathy

with the general decay; and carefully strew them over the beds of the flowers, to afford them a warm covering and protection from the ungenial winter. The sere and yellow leaves, eddying with the fitful breezes, fill up the hollows of the pastures, where the slumbering lilies and violets repose, and collect around the borders of the woods, where the vernal flowers are sleeping, and require their warmth and protection. Thus nature kindly guards the objects of her charge, from the evils to which they are inevitably exposed, affording an emblem of that providential care, which, though unseen, is always extended over us, to protect us from those evils which misfortune or our own improvidence may have created.

As the month advances, the hoary aspect of winter becomes more and more apparent over the face of the landscape. The scarlet berries of the rose and the prinos are conspicuous upon their leafless stems, and the nests of birds, hitherto concealed, are disclosed to observation by the absence of the foliage. The brown fruit of the hazel is bending from its naked branches, and the prickly globes of the chestnut are scattered abundantly beneath its lofty boughs. The asters, golden-rods, and other autumnal flowers, which a month since were in all their splendor, now cover the plains with a kind of hoary plumage, consisting of globular heads of down, into which they have been transformed. These downy wreaths are hardly less elegant than the flowers, and form one of the most interesting appearances of the landscape at the present time. The plumed seeds of the thistle are sailing upon the wind, and the feathery tassels of the clematis are hanging from the vines, making a warm shelter for the birds in their time of need.

There are rural sounds as well as rural sights which are characteristic of this and every other month of the year. The piping of the frogs in spring, the warbling of birds in the early summer, and the chirping of insects in the latter summer and the early autumn, are all associated with the beauties and the bounties of their respective seasons. The chirping of insects declines during October, and dies away to silence by the middle of the present month; and then do the voices of the winter birds become more audible in their woodland solitudes. Their harsh, unmusical voices harmonize not unpleasantly with the murmuring of wintry winds, and with the desolate appearance of nature. The water birds assemble in large flocks upon the lakes and in the harbors, and become peculiarly loquacious; and occasionally on still evenings, we hear the cackling flight of geese, as they are proceeding aloft in the heavens to the places of their hyemal abode. These different sounds, though unmusical and melancholy, awaken many pleasing recollections of past years, and are not unattended with emotions of tranquillizing pleasure.

No person, who visits the fields at the present time, can fail to perceive the change that has taken place in the perfumes of the air, since the leaves began to fall. There is no fragrance of blooming gardens, of flowering meads, or sweet-scented groves. The very grass, if perchance a late crop has been mowed by the husbandman, sends out a different fragrance from that of haying-time. The flowers of autumn are generally almost scentless; but there is a pleasant odor arising from the fallen leaves, when the sun is drying up the frost, which the preceding night had deposited on them, unlike any thing else in nature. We perceive also the scents of

withering maize, and other fading crops of the harvest, which are wafted on the gales, as they traverse over the fertile farms. It is difficult to describe a perfume; yet every one who is familiar with nature, might easily, by the fragrance of the atmosphere alone, determine the month of the year. Though the sweetness of summer is gone, there is a perfume on the breeze that tells of the gathered harvest, and speaks of plenteousness for the time to come.

A comparative silence now prevails in the woods, so lately vocal with melody. The birds that long since discontinued their songs, have forsaken our territories, and are neither to be heard nor seen. The grasshoppers have hung their harps upon the brown sedges, and they themselves are buried in a torpid sleep. The butterflies also have perished with the flowers, and the whole tribe of sportive insects, that enlivened the prospect with their rapid motions, have gone from our sight. Few sounds are heard on still days, save the dropping of nuts, the rustling of leaves, and the careering of the occasional fitful breezes that spring up amidst the general calm. Beautiful sights and sounds have vanished together, and the rambler who goes out to greet the cheerful objects of nature, finds himself alone, communing only with silence and decay. It is on the pleasant days of November, that we most fully realize how much of the pleasure of a rural excursion is derived from the melodies, that greet our ears during the vocal season of the year. Since the merrymaking tenants of the grove have left them to silence and solitude, nature seems divested of a portion of life and personality. While apart from all sounds of rejoicing and animation, we seem to be in the presence of friends, who are silent with mourning over some dismal bereave-

ments. In the vocal season, the merry voices of birds and insects yield life to the inanimate objects around us, and nature herself seems to be talking with us, in our solitary but not lonely walk. But when these gay and social creatures are absent, our once companionable excursions are converted into actual solitude. No cheerful voices are speaking to us; no bright flowers are smiling upon us, and we feel like one who is left alone in the world, to muse over the scenes of departed joys and absent friends.

But the silence to which I have alluded is chiefly that of the singing birds, whose voices are the natural language of love and rejoicing. There are still many sounds abroad which are characteristic of the season. Hollow winds are sighing through the half leafless wood, and the sharp rustling of the dry oak leaves is heard aloft in the place of the warbling of birds and the soft whispering of zephyrs. The winds as they sweep over the shrubbery produce a shrill sound, that chills us in imagination, as the bleak foreboding of winter. The passing breezes have lost that mellowness of tone that comes from them in summer, while floating over the tender herbs and flexible grain. Every sound they now produce is sharper, whether they are rustling among the dry cornfields, or whistling among the naked branches of the trees. Since the forests have shed their leaves, the voices of the remaining birds are heard with more distinctness, and the woodland echoes are repeated, with a greater number of reverberations, among the rocks and hills.

Our rural festivities are passed, the harvest is gathered, and all hands are busy in preparing for the comforts of the winter fireside. The days are shortened and the sun at noonday looks down upon us with a slanting

beam and diminished fervor, or remains behind the misty veil that overshadows the earth. Dark clouds of ominous forms and threatening look, brood sometimes for whole days over the sullen atmosphere, through which the struggling beams of the sun will occasionally peer, with a smile of complacency, that seems to bid us not wholly despair of his benignant presence. Every object in the rural world tells of the coming of snows, and of the rapid passing of the genial days of autumn. The evergreens are the only lively objects that grace the landscape; and the flowers lie buried under the faded leaves of the lately beautiful forests, that now lift up their naked branches, as if in supplication to the skies. The spirit of autumnal desolation sits upon the hills; and in her baleful presence, the northern blasts assemble upon the plains, and the wintry frosts gather together in the once smiling valleys.

Such are the changes of the seasons; melancholy emblems of the vicissitudes of life. Transient is the period of youth, like the blooming month of May; and rapidly, like the flowers of summer, fade all the joys of early manhood. Our early hopes, after they have finished their songs of promise, vanish like the warbling birds; and the visions of our youthful fancy, flit away like the insects that glitter for a few brief days, and then perish for ever. Yet as the pleasant things of one month are followed by those equally delightful in the next that arrives—so are the joys of youth that perish, succeeded by the riper, though less exhilarating pleasures of manhood. These, in their turn, are lost, but to be replaced by the tranquil and sober comforts of age, as the autumnal harvest crowns the luxurious enjoyments of summer. Joys are constantly alternating with sorrows; and the regrets we pour over our

bereavements are softened and subdued by the new bounties and blessings of the present season. While we are lamenting the departure of one beautiful month, another, no less delightful, has already arrived ; and the winters of our sorrow are always succeeded by vernal periods of enjoyment.

Though we are accustomed to regret the lapse of summer, and to dread the coming of winter, there is a providential wisdom in these revolutions of the seasons ; and although our enjoyments are greater in the balmy summer-time, than during any other period, yet their average is greater than it would be if this delightful season were to remain with us throughout the year. There is an influence breathing from all nature in the autumn that leads one to reflect on the charms of the seasons that have flown, and prepares us by the regret thus awakened to realize their full worth, and to experience the greater rapture, when we meet them once more.

But to the man who contemplates the works of nature with a philosophic eye, still more to the poet and the moralist, do these changes and vicissitudes yield sources of never-ending pleasure. They afford him that tranquil and untiring amusement, which is derived from watching the growth of the fields, through all its gradations, from the seed to the flower, from the tender bud to the leaf, and from the seedling to the perfect plant. The budding of the trees, the gradual expansion of their leaves, and all the changes through which they pass, until their final decay, present unfailing topics of curious and pleasing meditation. In every change that happens, he discovers a new fund of reflections, on the grandeur and harmony of nature's works. Even the melancholy which the man of feeling experi-

ences in autumn, differs from despondency, and partakes of the character of positive pleasure. Notwithstanding our lamentations over the departure of flowers and the coming of snows, there would be a monotony in a perpetual summer, which would soon be followed by indifference; and then amidst all the beauties and blessings of nature, our hearts would be cloyed with luxurious enjoyments, and sighing after unattainable happiness.

XXXV.

THE FALL OF THE LEAF.

THE two most interesting periods to one who is in the habit of associating some agreeable sentiment with the phases of nature, occur when the trees are putting forth their tender leaves and flowers in the opening of the year, and when they are assuming the variegated hues that precede the fall of the leaf. Hence the spring and the autumn have always been regarded as pre-eminently the two poetical seasons — the one emblemizing the period of youth, the other that of old age. But to the eye of the painter as well as the poet do these two seasons offer the greatest attractions. In the spring, while the leaves are bursting from their hibernacles, and unfolding their plaited forms, they exhibit a great variety of tints, which are constantly changing with the progress of their development. In autumn, during a space of about two weeks, they pass through another succession of hues ; and this change, connected with the fall of the leaf, has given rise to many pleasing sentiments, which have been woven into the poetry of all nations. It is a common fallacy to regard those objects as the most picturesque which have the least positive beauty ; but landscape-painters, actuated by a

different opinion, have, for the purpose of adding a picturesque charm to the scenes they portray, most frequently chosen the autumn for their representations, and given to their trees the beautiful tints of the declining year.

If we would learn the full comparative value of trees, as ornamental objects, it is necessary to study them under the different aspects they assume, during each of the four seasons. They should be observed in May and June, when they are putting forth their leaves and blossoms; in July and August, when they have completed the growth and maturity of their foliage; in October, when they are hung with fruits, and are assuming the tints that precede their decay; and lastly, in December and later, when they appear in their denuded state, and have lost all their beauty, except that of the forms and arrangements of their branches. Under each of these aspects, they are a study which cannot fail to reward the observer, by affording him many new ideas, which will assist him in comprehending the beauty and grandeur of vegetable forms and colors.

The season of the fall of the leaf commences, in general, about the twentieth of September, and varying with the character of the weather, continues until near the third week in November. It occupies a space of about two months, and may be divided into three periods. The first includes the time between the twentieth of September and the middle of the next month, when the maple, the ash, the tupelo, the creeper, the hickory, the beech, and the chestnut are in their full splendor. During this period the yellow, orange, and scarlet hues predominate in the tints of the foliage. The second period occupies a space of about

two weeks from the end of the first, when the oaks have fully ripened their tints, and many of the trees just named have become leafless. This period is remarkable for a predominance of red, crimson, and purple hues in the color of the foliage; and it lasts until about the seventh or tenth of November. The third period commences with a succession of severe frosts, that destroy all the remaining tints of the forest, and change them into one uniform and monotonous brown. This period may be said to terminate with the early snows of winter, and is remarkable, in some years, for a series of warm days which have been called the Indian Summer.

All those who are accustomed to note the successive changes in the face of nature, must have observed that the different species of trees and shrubs lose their leaves at different dates in the autumn, some being entirely denuded, while others hardly exhibit any change in their foliage. It may be further remarked that some species preserve their verdure until their leaves drop to the ground; among which we may class a great proportion of exotic trees and shrubs. Others roll up their leaves into a crisp before their fall, like the most of the herbaceous plants, without materially changing their color except by fading. Such are the locust, and some of the fruit-trees. The leaves of a third class, without wilting or withering, change from green to some brilliant color, and make their beauty the harbinger of their decay. The greater number of the trees and shrubs belonging to the United States, are of this last description.

Those trees in general that exhibit the earliest and brightest tints, are the first to lose their leaves. This is observable especially in the maples, whose tints of yel-

low, orange, red, crimson, and purple are conspicuous, while the leaves of most other species are still green. No sooner have other trees universally assumed their autumnal hues, than the maples have mostly become leafless. While the latter are still wearing their gayest robes we may observe the hues of yellow, orange, and brown of the common American elms. The tints of the elm are neither so brilliant nor so various as those of the maple. They consist only of a few shades of brown and yellow, which partake of the want of brilliancy that characterizes the verdure of the same tree. It is worthy of notice, that while these trees are thus gleaming with gold, the English elm still retains the greenness of its foliage almost as pure as in summer. The same difference may be observed between the greater part of the indigenous trees of America, and those of England and the continent of Europe.

This habit of European trees has led many persons to prefer them for ornamental purposes, to their kindred American species. A few additional weeks of verdure in the foliage of our trees, though it would not retard the approaching cold, would be a prolongation of one of the pleasant advantages of summer. But it ought not to be overlooked, that if the American trees do not continue in leaf so long as those of Europe, they greatly exceed them in brilliancy and variety of their autumnal hues. Should we, therefore, substitute foreign trees with their prolonged verdure, for our indigenous trees, with their early fading leaf, we should have autumn without its present charms. Nature, in the fall, would then resemble an old man without those silvery hairs, which are the crowning ornament of his years.

Among our trees the maples exhibit the greatest variety in their tints. Of different individuals of the

same species, even when growing, side by side, in the same situation, not unfrequently some will have foliage of a bright yellow, others of vermilion, some of scarlet and crimson, while others still retain their summer verdure. In this respect the maples differ from other trees, of which individuals of the same species seldom greatly differ in their tints. Notwithstanding, therefore, the rapidity with which they lose their foliage, these trees are the principal charm of our woods, during the first autumnal period. The ash succeeds the maple in the ripeness of its hues and the fall of its leaves. The American poplars lose their leaves about the same time ; but their tints, though more brilliant than those of the ash, are confined to the lighter shades of yellow. The birch, the beech, the chestnut, and the hickory, all of which are clad, with more or less brilliancy, in yellows, succeed the poplar. Similar hues predominate in the lime, the larch, the cherry, and the wych-hazel.

But there are several species in which the different shades of red and purple prevail. Among these may be named the swamp hornbeam, or tupelo, which is one of the most brilliantly illuminated trees in our woods. In the shade its leaves are of a bright orange ; but when exposed to the direct rays of the sun, they vary from vermilion to scarlet, seldom, I believe, approaching to purple. Like other brightly tinted foliage, that of the hornbeam falls early in the season, seldom remaining above a week in its full splendor. While the yellow tints predominate in the trees, the reds and crimsons predominate in the shrubbery. Conspicuous among these are all the species of the blueberry and whortleberry tribe, that yield a fairy-like splendor to our wild upland pastures. Equally beautiful and more brilliant are the leaves of the common creeper, that often

covers whole trees in our woods, mingling its pure scarlet with the different colors of the tree that supports it. The most of the sumachs exhibit a predominance of purple in the hues of their foliage, mixed with their original verdure. The viburnums and cornels are likewise variously shaded with purple and crimson.

The preceding remarks present an imperfect sketch of the appearance of autumnal foliage, during the first period of the fall of the leaf, when the yellow and scarlet hues are the prevailing ones in our woodland scenery. During the second period, very few of the yellows are to be seen, if we except the yellowish green tints of the different species of willow. The oaks are the glory of the second period, and are remarkable for the long duration of their beauty. Though their hues are neither so brilliant nor so variegated as those of the maples, yet they are at this time almost the only deciduous trees, of indigenous growth, that remain in foliage. Long after the remainder of the wood is leafless, except the evergreens, the brown, gray, chocolate, crimson, and purple tints of the different species of the oak lend a charm to the forests which cannot be surpassed. The foliage of the oaks during summer is not exceeded in its finely indented forms, in the pure lustre of its surface, in its firmness, without any deficiency of tremulous motion, and may be said to combine a greater variety of those qualities that affect the mind with agreeable sensations, than that of any other tree. It is likewise remarkably tenacious of its hold on the branches, where it often remains until the opening of spring. Hence the rustling of the dry oak leaf always pleasantly reminds one of the appearances of nature, during her season of rest, and of our winter walks in the forest.

Among the shrubs that retain their leaves during the

second period, are the wild rose, the gooseberry, the barberry, the sweet gale, and a few others. Of our fruit-trees, the pear, which exhibits several tints varying from yellow to red, intermixed with a larger proportion of green leaves, loses its foliage, during the first period of autumn, ten days or a fortnight before the apple-tree. The great majority of fruit-trees retain their leaves till near the middle of November, and exhibit only a slight mixture of tints. In general, our orchards continue in leaf to a later date than our forests. This difference may be attributed to the foreign origin of our common fruit-trees.

In the plains and lowlands, some of the most prominent objects, during the second period, are the willows of different species. These trees preserve their leaves and their verdure very late in the season, fading only to a light yellowish green before they fall. The weeping-willow, which was originally brought from the south of Europe, retains the greenness of its foliage till the late frosts of November destroys it. There is no tree in our climate except the evergreens, that preserves its verdure so many weeks, putting out its leaves very early in spring and retaining them until all other trees are denuded. This habit of the tree makes a pleasant compensation for its almost entire want of those fine tinges which are the glory of other trees that have a more short-lived foliage. And when, amidst the general nakedness of the groves, we behold the drooping branches of the weeping-willow, waving majestically in the wind, with its noble form and foliage still unchanged by frost or by natural decay, it seems like something protected by enchantment.

The continued greenness of foreign trees, and their habit of retaining their foliage to a later period than

our indigenous species, is also remarkable in the Italian poplar and the privet, whose leaves seem to be hardly susceptible of injury from the frost. It might be inferred that trees and shrubs which were brought from climates warmer than our own would be more susceptible of injury from our autumnal frosts. So far is this from the fact, that their foliage is evidently more hardy than that of our indigenous species. It may be explained by supposing that the leaves of a plant from a more southern latitude, or from a country, like England, with a longer growing season, require a longer time to arrive at maturity, and that their power of resisting frost consists in their greater vitality. On the same principle we may explain the fact very commonly observed, that a second growth of leaves, sometimes put forth after the first growth has been completed, has a remarkable power of resisting the action of frost. Whatever may be the explanation, it is true that the early frosts of autumn, that cause the leaves of many of our indigenous trees to drop to the ground, produce no visible effect on some of the exotics; nor do the intense rays of an American sun color them as they do the leaves of our own trees.

The beautiful tints of autumnal foliage are not correctly attributed to the action of frost. Neither are they the effect of the maturity, but rather of the old age of the leaf; and they may often be observed as early as August in those trees which are in a declining state of health. While passing by the Salem common during the second week in August, (1854,) I observed a maple in its full autumnal drapery of crimson. On examining it I found that the tree had been nearly girdled. The wound had been healed, and left only a narrow strip of bark, about three inches in width to

sustain the whole plant. This might have been sufficient for that purpose, during a moist summer; but on account of the drought of the preceding July, it failed to supply the tree with sustenance, and a premature old age of the leaf and its accompanying tints were the consequence. A severe frost at that early date would have produced no such effect. An early frost always injures these tints by searing and imbrowning the leaves which are exposed to it. This effect was noticed in the autumn of 1853 when the leaves that ripened later than usual, on account of long-continued rains in the latter part of summer, were overtaken by two very severe frosts, before they had begun to be tinted. In October, the effects of these frosts were apparent in a brownish tinge on the outer surface of the trees, greatly impairing the lustre of their tints, which were not so brilliant as usual.

The cause of the superior beauty of our autumnal hues, compared with those of Europe, is undoubtedly the greater intensity of the sun's rays and the greater proportion of clear and dry weather in America, causing the leaves to arrive sooner to maturity and old age. As these influences do not act in the same way upon European trees when introduced into this country, it would be important to note whether American trees preserve their peculiar habit when transplanted to European soils. There is reason to believe that, while these tints are attributable to the influence of our hot summers and clear skies, the habit was acquired with the origin of the species countless ages back, like the black skin of the negro, and that it is now beyond any such climatal influence. Though it might have owed its origin to this peculiarity of our climate, the habit is now one of the characteristics of the species. In all

cases the leaf becomes tinted only when it has lost a certain portion of its vitality, and just before it is ready to fall from the tree.

The pines are not classed with deciduous trees ; yet they shed their leaves in autumn as regularly as the latter. Late in October you may observe the yellow foliage which is ready to fall, surrounding the last year's growth of the branches, and exhibiting a curious intermixture of yellow with the green growth of the last summer. These leaves always turn yellow before they fall ; you never find the green leaves of a pine-tree, as you do of many other trees, mixed with the other foliage upon the ground. The same fact may be noticed of the oaks.

As late as the second week in November we can seldom find one of our indigenous trees with any green leaves upon it, unless it be a young tree, under the protection of woods. The third period has now commenced ; and the fall of the leaf is nearly completed. The oaks, though not entirely stript of their leafy honors, have lost the beauty of their hues, and bear their heads less proudly among the leafless tenants of the forest. The grass already exhibits a seared and brown appearance, and is becoming tasteless to the flocks. A few asters may still be seen, a golden-rod in damp places, an occasional solitary coreopsis in the meadows, or a blue-fringed gentian standing erect among the brown herbage of the fields. But amid the general desolate appearance of nature, the scarlet berries of the prinus are conspicuous among the wild shrubbery ; and the wych-hazel, clad in a full drapery of yellow blossoms, stands ready with joyful hues to welcome the Indian summer.

The Indian summer, which arrives during this third

autumnal period, if it comes at all, is a brief period of warm weather, that sometimes greets our climate in November, after the fall of the leaf, and not as many suppose in October. It is probably caused by the sudden check given to vegetable perspiration, by the fall of the leaves. It is well known that by sprinkling a floor, to cool a room in hot weather, we cause the heat to be carried off with the evaporation of the water. On the same principle, the infinite host of trees, whose leaves are constantly evaporating the moisture of the earth, must proportionally cool its surface, and the atmosphere that is in contact with it. Any thing that increases evaporation from the earth's surface must cool it in the same manner. Hence we may explain the greater coldness of the air over valleys and wet places on summer evenings, and the fact, often noticed, that a rainy spell in autumn is commonly succeeded by severe frosts. The greater burden of the foliage of our woods remains on the trees and shrubs, until the severe frosts in the latter part of October. About this time the whole extent of our forests is often laid bare in the brief space of a week or ten days. Not only does this great extent of surface, thus laid open to the sun, receive from his rays an increased amount of heat, but there is a vast and sudden diminution, at the same time, of that evaporation which is caused by the leaves of plants. These two circumstances unite in producing, when no outward agencies interfere, a great accumulation of heat. The warm spell that follows is the true Indian summer, and may last from five to eight days. During one of these spells of fine weather, I have sometimes heard the crickets chirping merrily as late as the eighteenth of November.

But our climate is exposed to such a variety of influ-

ences, by our geographical position, that the kind intentions of nature are, as it were, often defeated. In the ordinary course of things, we should be favored every year with this genial period of sunshine and warmth. But the north winds will sometimes rush down prematurely upon our territories, and bring winter along before its time. Farewell, then, to the Indian summer for that season. The tuneful insects, after chirping incessantly during all the early autumn, are obliged to sink into their winter sleep, without singing the requiem of the year. Rustic toils and rural sports are brought to a sudden termination, and the only beings who seem to rejoice are the boys, who are delighted with an early opportunity to renew the sports of winter.

XXXVI.

THE INDIAN SUMMER.



TH' autumnal hues have faded in the woods ;
The birds have left their flowerless solitudes.
The leaves are falling fast, and from the sky,
The chilly breezes may be heard to sigh,
As often, in their now deserted bowers,
The north wind eddies o'er the graves of flowers.
Our rural haunts are desolate and drear,
And all the wild domain is brown and sere,
The many-tinted groves, the cool recess,
The summer shelter for our weariness,
Are opened rudely to the glare of day,
And wintry winds within their arbors play.
Some late-born asters linger on the plains,
That come not out till summer's beauty wanes ;
And pale gerardias, in our woodland walk,
Are hardly faded on their wilted stalk ;
And gentians with their eyelids fringed with blue,
Still glitter in the morning's frosty dew ; —
But few will trust their flowers, now summer's past,
To wintry winds and rude November's blast.

But though the flowers have faded on the hill,
Full many an object charms the senses still ;
For even the dark brown naked woods are full
Of pleasant sounds and prospects never dull.
The woody glens are open to the sun,
Who lingers in the bowers he used to shun.
The leafy forest windows are unclosed ;
The ferns that summer hid are now exposed.
The trailing evergreens and hair-like moss
Peep through the scattered leaves, with livelier gloss ;
And many a curious relic, to reward
The rambler's toil, is scattered o'er the sward.
When nature hides one page, her hands unfold
One no less bright, we could not else behold :
And as the months perform their annual round,
O'er beauty's grave is new-born beauty found.

Of in this month, with bright complacent smile,
The sun dispels the frowning clouds awhile ;
Lifts up the misty curtain that conceals
The heavenly radiance summer's sky reveals ;
Sheds softer azure on the calm blue sea,
And spreads a greener verdure on the lea.
Shortly before December rules the year,
Upon the wintry skies, new signs appear ;
A milder planet guides the hours of night,
And fairer day-beams harbinger the light.
Thus in an hour of sorrow, when opprest
By anxious cares that steal away our rest,
Will unexpected gleams of hope arise,
And chase the clouded prospect from our eyes.

The summer sun once more regains his sway ;
O'er the brown landscape breathes a warmer ray ;

Sheds o'er the rising mist a roseate hue,
And bathes the cheeks of morn once more in dew ;
To prisoned zephyrs grants a short reprieve,
And binds fresh roses o'er the brows of eve :
Calls up the sweet south wind — the wind that bears
Aerial sweets a fairer clime prepares,
And sends it forth dispensing stores of balm,
Culled from the groves that bear the date and palm.
Then the soft breezes, stored with fresh perfumes,
Entice the bee to seek the faded blooms.
Insects awaking from their torpid state,
As with new life, are joyful and elate.
The crickets from their little burrows flee,
And strike their winged harps in all their wonted glee.
The summer flies once more are gambolling
Upon the waters, and the meadows ring
With tiny voices, as they gayly call
All nature to their joyous festival.

The sun shines out with dim but powerful blaze,
Illuming all the wide surrounding haze : —
The rising mist November's breath distils,
When warmer days have loosed the mountain rills.
The winds and waves are silent on the shore ;
The hoarfrost glitters in the fields no more ;
The squirrel sits again upon her bough ;
The swain has yoked his oxen to the plough.
The sparrow sings again his social song,
And calls out from the woods his feathered throng.
Whole flocks of birds emerge from sheltered coves,
To greet the pleasant scenes of former loves.
The merry village children have come out,
And in the sunshine make a joyful rout.
The ducks are more loquacious in the pool,
Rejoicing in the season's gentler rule.

And such I deem a boon from nature's hand,
To aid the weakness of her mortal band.
'T is thus she grants to those who have delayed
Their later tasks, a seasonable aid,
To help the weak and backward to provide
Those comforts cheerless winter has denied.
Then do the little emmets rise to mend
Their injured hillocks ere the season's end.
And man is not then idle; he derives
A blessing from this gift; spring toil revives;
The work of early seed-time is begun;
All his neglected harvest toil is done;
And the poor cottager, who gleans the earth,
To gather fuel for her lonely hearth,
Blesses the God and helper of the poor,
For this bright sunshine round her cottage door.
All creatures that are destined soon to die,
Again awake, and come abroad, and ply
Their various toils; make merry while they stay,
And live before their fate a pleasant holiday.

XXXVII.

PICTURESQUE ANIMALS.



It may be observed that in pictures, when a certain effect is required, an animal is often introduced whose character and habits correspond with the scenery, or the sentiment to be awakened. A scene in nature, without some such accompaniment, often fails in producing any emotion in the mind. A heron standing on the borders of a solitary mere, a kingfisher sitting on the leafless branch of a tree that extends over the tide, a woodpecker climbing the denuded branch of an oak, yield to the respective scenes in which they are represented, a life and a character which could not be so well expressed without them. A few cows grazing on a grassy slope, a dog reposing at the door step of a cottage, or a cat quietly slumbering inside of the window, are each suggestive of pleasant images of rural life, and add greatly to the interest of the scene. The majority of animals require to be seen in connection with certain other objects to acquire a picturesque expression; but there are others which are endowed with this quality in a remarkable degree, and need only to be seen in any situation to awaken a certain agreeable train of images.

Among birds the owl is often represented in engravings, when it is designed to impart to the scene a character of desolation. We often see this bird accompanying a picture of ruins or of a deserted house, and in poetry he is introduced to awaken certain peculiar trains of thought. Thus the poet Gray, when he would add a desolate expression to his description of evening, speaks of the owl as complaining to the moon of such as molest his ancient solitary reign. The allusion to his nocturnal habits, and to his solitary dominions, brings still more vividly to mind those qualities with which the image of the bird is associated. His appropriate habitations are the ruined tower, the ancient belfry, or the hollow of an old tree. In all such places, the figure of the owl is deeply suggestive of those fancies, which are awakened by the sight of ancient dilapidated buildings, crumbling walls, and old houses supposed to be the residence of wicked spirits which are permitted to visit the earth.

It is on account of these dreary and poetic associations that the owl is so truly picturesque. He is often seen, in paintings and engravings, perched on an old gateway, or on one of the bars of an old fence, whose posts, leaning obliquely, show that they have been heaved by the frosts of many winters. In certain situations our slumbers are sometimes disturbed by the peculiar hooting of this bird, that awakens in the mind the gloomy horrors of midnight. His nocturnal and solitary habits, the unearthly tones and modulation of his voice, his practice of frequenting rude and desolate places and haunted houses, have caused his image to be intimately connected with mystery and gloomy forebodings of evil. The very stillness of his flight yields a sort of mysterious character to the bird ; all these cir-

cumstances, combined with his fabled reputation for wisdom, and his demure and solemn expression of countenance, have conspired to render the owl one of the most picturesque of all living creatures.

The bat is another creature, in some respects, of similar habits and reputation. Like the owl, it naturally seeks, for its retreat during the day, those unfrequented places where it is not liable to be disturbed, and has acquired a character and expression in harmony with the scenes it frequents. But it is remarkable that while the owl has obtained an emblematical character for wisdom, the bat is regarded as the emblem of guilt. He is represented as shunning the broad eye of day, and as flying out on leathern wing, after the dusky shades of evening may serve to hide him from detection. The sight of the bat, however, is far from awakening in our minds the idea of guilt; but his image is strongly suggestive of the pleasant serenity of evening, as the butterfly reminds us of summer fields and flowers. Our ideas of the bat are somewhat grotesque; and when, after the graceful swallow has retired to rest, we observe his irregular and zigzag flight, we are unavoidably reminded of his peculiar hideous formation, from which the idea of making him an emblem of guilt probably originated. It would seem as if he hid himself during the day, lest his relationship to a race of beings now almost banished from the earth might be discovered. His emblematical character does not prevent his forming an interesting feature in a rural scene. Hence in pictorial representations of evening, we see the last rays of the sun streaming upward in beautiful radiations from behind a hill, while the bat is flitting about an old house, in a rude and rather quiet landscape.

All animals are picturesque which are consecrated to poetry. In English descriptive poetry the lark is as familiar to us as the rose that clambers around the cottage door. The unrivalled brilliancy of his song which, by description, is impressed on our minds with a vividness almost like that of remembrance, and its continuance after he has soared to an immense height in the air, cause him to be allied in our minds with the sublimity of heaven, as well as with the beauty and splendor of morning. I never had an opportunity to witness the flight of the skylark; but I have always imagined that the sentiment of sublimity must greatly enhance the pleasure with which we gaze upon his flight and listen to his notes. The very minuteness of an object soaring to such a sublime elevation gives us an idea of some almost supernatural power, and his delightful song would seem to be derived from heaven, whither he takes his flight while giving utterance to it. We have no skylarks in America; but our common snipes, during the month of May, are addicted to this habit of soaring, as I have remarked in another essay, for a few hours after sunset. I have often watched them in former times, and when witnessing their spiral flight upwards to a great elevation, and listening to their distinct but monotonous warbling after they have arrived at the summit of their ascent, I have been conscious of an emotion of sublimity from a spectacle which might be supposed too trivial to produce any such effect. The picturesque character of the lark is apparent only when he is represented in his soaring flight. There is nothing peculiar in the appearance of this bird as in that of the owl. The sight of him aloft in the heavens is necessary, therefore, to suggest the

idea of his habits and to make his true character apparent to the mind.

Among the animals mentioned by certain writers as possessing in an eminent degree those qualities which appertain to the picturesque, is the ass. This point in his character is attributed very erroneously to his shaggy and uncouth appearance. It may assist in heightening the expression of the animal; but there are various romantic and poetical ideas associated with his figure, to which this quality is mainly attributable. If it were owing to his rude and rough exterior, the baboon and the hyena would be as picturesque as the ass. No such ideas, however, are associated with these animals. The ass derives much of this character from his connection with the incidents of romance and history. He is the beast of burden most frequently mentioned in the Old Testament, in the Fables of Æsop, and in the writings of oriental travellers. As Dugald Stewart has observed, we associate him with the old patriarchs in their journeys to new lands; and we have often seen him forming an important figure in old paintings and engravings. It is not his shaggy coat and uncouth appearance that yield him his picturesque character, so much as the interesting scenes and adventures with which his figure is associated.

The same remarks may be applied with equal propriety to the goat. He is the animal of mountain scenery, and the sight of him suggests a variety of romantic incidents, connected with such landscape. He is often represented as standing on precipitous heights, and browsing upon dangerous declivities. He is in fact one of the dumb heroes of dangerous adventure. With the inhabitants of mountainous countries, as among the Alps and the Highlands of Scotland, the goat is

the domesticated animal that supplies them with milk. The hardiness and activity of the goat, his frequent introduction into pictures of Alpine scenery, and his habit of finding sustenance in wild regions and fastnesses where no other animal could live, combine to render his image strongly suggestive of rusticity and the simple habits of mountaineers.

It is common to regard the uncouthness of the appearance of these animals as the quality from which they derive their picturesque expression. It is much more probable that, on account of the absence of beauty of color, smoothness, and symmetry, the imagination is left more entirely to the influence of the poetic and traditional images connected with these animals. In this way it may often be explained why rudeness is, to a certain extent, a negative picturesque quality, because it leaves the imagination entirely to the suggestions of the scene; whereas, if it were very beautiful, the sight would be more agreeably occupied in surveying its intrinsic beauties than in dwelling upon its more poetical relations to certain other ideas and objects.

Why is the horse not a picturesque animal, it may be asked, but on account of the sleekness of his appearance? I am persuaded that his sleekness stands in the way of this expression, for the reason that it causes him to be associated with fashion and the pomp and pride of wealth. Hence, it must be allowed that the only horses that have this expression are shaggy ponies and cart-horses. This proves only that their rough exterior is the indication of the rusticity of their habits, not that it is an intrinsic quality of the picturesque, which has indeed no intrinsic qualities, like beauty, but depends entirely on associations. Were the case re-

versed, and were animals to become sleek when engaged in rustic employments, and rough and hairy when fed and combed and pampered by wealthy and lordly masters, in that case the sleekest animals would be the most picturesque. The squirrel, which is a sleek and graceful animal, is, in spite of these qualities, more picturesque than the rough and rusty looking rat. In this instance the usual principle is reversed, because the smoothness and gracefulness of the squirrel are associated with his interesting habits of playfulness and agility, while running about from branch to branch among his native groves. On the contrary, the smooth and symmetrical horse cannot, by any pictorial accompaniments, be made so expressive as the rough and homely ass.

I have just alluded to the squirrel as one of the most picturesque of the smaller animals; but it is worthy of notice that it must be represented in its native habitats to express this character in full force. Though a squirrel in a cage is a beautiful object, especially when turning his revolving grate by the rapid motions of his feet, yet a picture of one in that situation would have none of that suggestiveness of poetical and agreeable fancies that renders a scene picturesque. In a representation of a little cottage in the woods nothing could add more to its pleasing pastoral expression than the figure of a squirrel running along on a stonewall or on the branch of an old tree. The sight awakens all those poetical images which are associated with life in the fields. Place the squirrel in a cage and it reminds us only of the town, and expresses nothing that is agreeable to a poetic fancy. Every wild animal must appear to be enjoying its freedom, or the representation of it would fail in giving any delight. The same is true of

the human race, and while the laboring classes add to the pleasing character of a scene in nature, a single figure, male or female, in fashionable apparel, destroys the whole effect. Hence almost all the representations of picnics fail in awakening any poetic emotions.

A shepherd, when properly represented with his crook, which is his staff of office, and surrounded by the animals of his charge, his faithful dog, the rustic cottage, the sheepfold, and the general rude scenery of nature, is always picturesque. But his appearance must be entirely that of a shepherd, without any of the ways or the gear of a man of the town. I have seen a picture of two young shepherds in the Ambruzzi mountains, painted by an eminent English artist, in which the characteristic qualities of the scene are entirely destroyed by a certain genteel or finical air and expression observed in their countenance and attitudes. Instead of rustic shepherds we see two young men, each with a crook, sitting and reclining upon a rock. They are very neatly dressed, and look as if they were young sprigs of the nobility, who had gone into the mountains, for a few days, merely to play shepherd; so nicely is their hair arranged, that the longitudinal parting is distinctly seen, caused by the sleeking away of the hair on each side of the head. The expression of their faces corresponds with the rest of their appearance; one, in particular, having that look of conscious self-satisfaction which we often observe in a silly fop of the town. The very manner in which he leans his head upon his thumb and fingers betrays his concern, lest he should spoil the arrangement of his hair. How strange that the painter of this piece should not have seen that all these little trifles completely ruined the picturesque character of his painting!

One of the most interesting engravings I have seen, represents a peasant girl, in the neat and simple attire of her own humble station in life, in the act of bearing a pitcher of water which she has just dipped from a rustic well. How easily might the designer have ruined the whole expression of this piece, either by making the well an elegant and fanciful structure, or by making the damsel a fine lady in her silks and laces. The sight of a picnic party assembled together in the woods and pastures, is always pleasing ; but, as I have already intimated, it fails in interest when represented on canvas, because, with all the pleasing images connected with it, it savors of the vanity of fashionable or rather of town life. After witnessing one of these scenes, while journeying leisurely in a chaise on a pleasant day in October, I chanced to see a group of little country girls, in the simplest apparel, gathering nuts under a tree. What a crowd of pleasant recollections of the past was immediately awakened by the sight ! “ There (exclaimed my companion) is a scene for a painter. Such a little group, in a picture, would afford us inexpressible delight. Yet were I to join either party, I should prefer to be one of the other company at the picnic.” “ For the very plain reason,” I replied, “ that in the latter company you would expect to find some intelligent persons who would be interesting companions. But this is not what we look for in a picture, which pleases in proportion to the simplicity of its characters.”

These remarks might be indefinitely extended ; but each new example would serve only to repeat the illustration of the same principle. In no other engravings do we see the picturesque more clearly exemplified than in the vignettes which are found in books published •

early in the last century. Since luxury has extended into the circle of the middle and industrious classes, the simplicity of their habits has been destroyed, and artists, when drawing their designs from the manners of these classes, have failed in producing pictures equal in poetic expression to those which were made one hundred years ago. It is apparent, for example, that the ancient straw beehive, surrounded by its swarm, formerly introduced into vignettes as emblematical of industry, is decidedly picturesque; while the modern patent structures, constructed for purposes of economy, would, in fanciful engravings, excite ideas no more poetical than we should find in a modern revolving churn. Modern customs and improvements are rapidly sweeping away from the face of the earth every thing that is poetic or picturesque. It may be urged, however, that the sum of human happiness has been proportionally increased. This I am inclined to doubt; and to maintain, on the contrary, that just in proportion as we depart from the simple habits of the early era of civilization, do we create wants that cannot be gratified, and lose those tastes which are most promotive of happiness, and in harmony with the designs of nature and of providence.

XXXVIII.

DECEMBER.



It is one of the most cheerful employments for a leisure hour, to go out into the fields, under a mild, open sky, to study the various appearances of nature that accompany the changes of the seasons, and to note those phenomena which are peculiar to a climate of frost and snow. The inhabitant of the tropics with his perpetual summer, who sees no periodical changes except the alternations of rain and drought, is deprived of a happy advantage possessed by the inhabitant of the north; and with all the blessings of his voluptuous climate, is visited by a smaller portion of the moral enjoyments of life. In the minds of those who dwell in a northern latitude, there are sentiments which are probably never felt by the indolent dweller in the land of the date and the palm; and however poetical to us may seem the imagery drawn from the pictures we have read of those blissful regions, ours is most truly the region of poetry, and of all those sentiments which poetry aims to express.

It will not be denied that in winter, nature has comparatively but few attractions; that the woods and fields offer but few temptations to ramble; and that these are

such as appeal to the imagination, rather than to the senses, by furnishing matter for studious reflection, and calling up pleasing and poetic images. The man of phlegmatic mind sees, in all these phenomena, nothing but dreariness and desolation; while to the studious or the imaginative, every form of vegetation on the surface of the earth becomes an instructive lesson, or awakens a train of imagery that inspires him, on a winter's walk, with a buoyancy not often felt in the balmy days of June. Then does he trace, with unalloyed delight, every green leaf that seems budding out for spring; and in the general stillness, every sound from abroad has a gladness in its tone, not surpassed by the melodies of a summer morning.

On these pleasant days of winter, which are of frequent occurrence in our variable climate, I often indulge myself in a solitary ramble, taking note of those forms of vegetation that remain unchanged, and of the still greater number that lie folded in hyemal sleep. For such excursions the only proper time is when the earth is free from snow, which, though a beautifier of the prospect, conceals all minute objects that are strewed upon the ground, or that are still feebly vegetating under the protection of the woods. The most prominent appearances are the remains of autumnal vegetation. The stalks of the faded asters are still erect, with their downy heads shaking in the breeze, which has already scattered their seeds upon the ground; and the more conspicuous tufts of the golden-rods are seen in nodding and irregular rows under the fences, or bending over the ice that covers the meadows where they grew. All these are but the faded garlands of nature, that pleasantly remind us of the past festivities of summer, of cheerful toil, or studious recreation.

Nature never entirely conceals the beauties of the field and wood save when, for their protection, she covers them with snow. The faded remnants of last summer's vegetation may have but little positive beauty ; but to the mind of the naturalist they are attractive on account of the lessons they afford and the sentiments they awaken. But there are objects in the wood which are neither faded nor leafless ; and many that are leafless still retain their beauty and the appearance of life. Besides the evergreens, many of the herbs that bear the early spring flowers still retain their freshness, and spread out their green leaves in the protected nook or in the recesses of the fern-covered rocks. The leaves of the wild strawberry and the cinquefoil are always green in the meadows, and those of the violet on the sheltered slope of the hill. The crow'sfoot and the geranium are in many places as fresh as in May ; and the aquatic ranunculus and the wild-cresses are brightly glowing with their emerald foliage, in the depths of the crystal watercourses that remain unfrozen beneath the wooded precipice, or in the mossy ravines of the forest.

These phenomena are doubly interesting as evidences of the continued life of the beautiful things they represent, and of the invisible and ever watchful providence of nature. Every step we take brings under our review other similar curiosities of vegetable life, which, by reason of their commonness, often escape our observation. On the sandy plain the slender birch-trees are loaded with thousands of purple aments, suspended from their flexile twigs, all ready to burst into bloom at the very first breath of spring. In the wet lands, where the surface is one continued sheet of ice, the crowded alder-bushes are so full of these embryo blossoms, that their branches seem to be hung with dark purple fruit ;

and the sweet-fern of the upland pastures, in still mild weather, often faintly perfumes the atmosphere, with the scent of its half-developed leaves and flowers.

But the face of nature, at this time, is not an unfruitful subject for the poet or the painter. The evergreens, if not more beautiful, are more conspicuous than at any other season ; and there are many beautiful streamlets that ripple through the woods, and often in their depths find protection from the greatest cold. Around these streams the embroidering mosses are as green as the grasses in May. The water-cresses may be seen growing freshly at the bottom of their channels, and the ferns are beautiful among the shelving rocks, through which the waters make their gurgling tour. When the sun, at noonday, penetrates into these green and sheltered recesses, before the snow has come upon the earth, when the pines are waving overhead, the laurels clustering with the undergrowth, and the dewberry (evergreen blackberry) trailing at our feet, we can easily imagine ourselves surrounded by the green luxuriance of summer. Nature seems to have created these pleasant evergreen retreats, that they might afford to her pious votaries a shelter during their winter walks, and a prospect to gladden their eyes, when they go out to admire her works, and pay the homage of a humble heart to the great architect of the universe.

Nor is the season without its harvest. The sweet gale, or false myrtle, in dry places gleams with dense clusters of greenish white berries, that almost conceal the branches by their profusion ; the pale azure berries of the juniper are sparkling brightly in the midst of their sombre evergreen foliage ; and the winter-berry, or black alder bushes, glowing with the brightest scarlet fruit, and resembling at a distance pyramids of flame, are

irregularly distributed over the wooded swamps. While the barberries hang in wilted and blackened clusters from their bushes in the uplands, the cranberries in the peat meadows shine out like glistening rubies, from their masses of delicate and tangled vinery. In the open places of the woods, the earth is mantled with the dark glossy green leaves of the gaultheria, half concealing its drooping crimson berries; and the mitchella of a more curious habit, each berry being formed by the united germs of two flowers, (twins upon the same stem,) adorns similar places with fairer foliage and brighter fruit.

There is a sort of perpetual spring in these protected arbors and recesses, where we may at all times behold the springing herbs and sprouting shrubbery, when they are not hidden under the snow-drift. The American hare feeds upon the foliage of these tender herbs, when she exposes herself at this season to the aim of the gunner. She cannot so well provide for her winter wants as the squirrel, whose food, contained in a husk or a nutshell, may be abundantly hoarded in her subterranean granaries. The hare in her garment of fur, protected from the cold, feels no fear of the climate; and man is almost the only enemy who threatens her, when she comes out timidly to browse upon the scant leaves of the white clover, or the heath-like foliage of the hypericum.

But the charm of a winter's walk is derived chiefly from the flowerless plants — the ferns and lichens of the rocks, the mosses of the dells and meres, and the trailing wintergreens of the shrubbery pastures. Many species of these plants seem to revel in cold weather, as if it were congenial to their health and wants. To them has nature intrusted the care of dressing all her

barren places in verdure, and of preserving a grateful remnant of summer beauty, in the dreary places of winter's abode. And it is not to be wondered, that, to the fanciful minds of every nation, the woods have always seemed to be peopled with fairy spirits, by whose unseen hands the earth is garlanded with lovely wreaths of verdure, at a time when not a flower is to be found upon the hills or in the meadow.

Whether we are adapted to nature, or nature to us, it is not to be denied, that on the face of the earth, those appearances established by nature are more congenial to our feelings than others strictly artificial. The lichen-covered rocks, that form so remarkable a feature of the hills surrounding our coast, are far more pleasing to every man's sight than similar rocks without this garniture. All this may be partly attributed to the different associations connected with the two, in our habitual trains of thought;—the one presenting to us the evidence of antiquity, the other only the disagreeable idea of that defacement, so generally attendant on the progress of pioneer settlements. Hence the lichens and mosses, upon the surface of the rocks, have an expression which has always been eagerly copied by the painter, and is associated with many romantic images, like the clambering ivy upon the walls of an ancient ruined tower.

At this season, when the greater part of the landscape is either covered with snow, or with the seared and brown herbage of winter, this vegetation of the rocks has a singular interest. In summer, the rocks are bald in their appearance, while all around them is fresh and lively. In winter, on the other hand, they are covered with a pale verdure, interspersed with many brilliant colors, while the surrounding surface is a comparative

blank. Some objects are intrinsically beautiful, others are beautiful by suggestion, others again by contrast. This latter principle causes many things to appear delightful to the eye at one period, which at other times would, by comparison with brighter objects, seem dull and lifeless. Hence on a winter's ramble, when there is no snow upon the ground, our attention is fixed, not only upon the lichens and evergreens, but likewise on the bright purple glow that proceeds from every plat of living shrubbery which is spread out in the wild. This appearance is beautiful by contrast with the dull sombre hues of the surrounding faded herbage, and it is likewise strongly suggestive of the life and vigor of nature. It is the vivid hue of health, and entirely unlike the hue of the same plants if they were dead or dying. It is not necessary that we should have meditated upon this idea, in order to be affected by it. We are all unconscious physiognomists of the face of nature; and over a wide tract of country, were the vegetation blasted in autumn, by some secret pestilence that had destroyed its vitality, its whole aspect would be such as to sadden every beholder, though unaware of the fatal event. As the human face in sleep wears the glow, if not the animation of waking life — so the face of nature, in her hyemal sleep, has a glow that harmonizes with our feelings and with our sense of universal beauty.

The wild wood is always full of instruction for those who are mindful either of its general aspects or its minuter details; and a ramble on a pleasant winter's day produces on the mind an invigorating effect that might be used as a safeguard against mental depression. The landscape, when undisfigured by art, is never without beauty, and the woods are always redolent of sweet odors that assist in perfecting the illusions

that arise from agreeable sights. While the exercise thus partaken in the open air strengthens the body and improves the health, the objects presented for our contemplation are tonic and exhilarant in their action on the mind. Whatever may be the season of the year, to the student of science as well as to the lover of beauty, something is always presented to fix his attention or awaken his admiration, and he seldom returns from a woodland ramble without increased cheerfulness and a prospect of new sources of rational happiness.

XXXIX.

OLD HOUSES AND THEIR INCLOSURES.



WHEN we are journeying in the country, we have all occasionally felt that the sight of the finest houses and the most highly ornamented grounds, does not always affect the mind with the greatest pleasure. One is soon tired of objects, however beautiful, that produce no other effect than to excite an agreeable visual sensation. Something that affords a pleasing exercise for the sympathies and the imagination must be blended with all scenes of beauty, or they soon become vapid and uninteresting. When one first enters the interior of a spacious dome, which is surrounded with colored glass windows, the physical sensation of beauty thus produced, may detain him a few moments, with extreme pleasure. But a frequent repetition of these visits would cause the spectacle to be extremely tiresome, because it excites the eye without affecting the mind. The very opposite effect would be produced by visiting a gallery of paintings, because there is no end to the ideas and images which these works of genius may suggest to the mind.

In like manner when travelling among the scenes of nature and art, many a highly ornamented house passes

before our eyes, without making any impression upon the mind, that differs from those produced by examining the plates of fashions in the window of a tailor's shop. As we proceed further into the country we presently encounter a scene that awakens a different class of emotions, that seem to penetrate more deeply into the soul. An old house, containing two stories in front, with the back roof extending almost to the ground, is seen half protected by the drooping branches of a venerable elm. A Virginia creeper hangs in careless festoons around the low windows, and a white rose-bush grows luxuriantly over the plain board fence that incloses the garden. The house stands a few rods back from the street, and is surrounded in front and on one side by an extensive grass plat, neatly shorn by the grazing animals, while sauntering on their return from pasture. An old barn is near; and the flocks and the poultry seem to enjoy an amount of comfort which we might look for in vain, in the vicinity of a more ornate dwelling-house.

There is an appearance of comfort and freedom about this old house, that renders it a pleasing object to almost every eye. No one can see it without calling to mind the old-fashioned people whom we always suppose to be its occupants. About it and around it we see no evidences of that constraint to which the indwellers and visitors of some more fashionable houses must be doomed. The exterior is associated with its interior arrangements, no less than with the scenes around it. We see, in the mind's eye, the wide entry into which the front door opens, the broad and angular staircase, the window in the upper entry, that looks out upon a rustic landscape dotted with fruit-trees, and patches of ploughed land alternating with green

meadow. By the side of the staircase, on the lower floor, stands an ancient clock, whose loud striking, and slow stroke of the pendulum, are associated with the old style of low-studded rooms. Perhaps by studying the cause of the pleasant emotions with which we contemplate this old house, we may arrive at the knowledge of a principle that may be turned to advantage, in regulating our own and the public taste.

The charm of these old houses, which are marked by neatness and plainness, and by an absence of all pretension, is founded on the natural yearning of every human soul after freedom and simplicity. In them we behold the evidences of a mode of life, which, if we could but rid our hearts of a little *madness*, we should above all choose for ourselves. The human heart naturally attaches itself to those scenes, in which it would be free to indulge its own natural fancies. But there is a habit stronger than nature, derived from our perverted education, that causes us to choose a part that will excite the envy of our neighbors, in preference to one that would best promote our own happiness. Hence a man chooses to be embarrassed with expenses above his pecuniary condition, for the vain purpose of exciting admiration, rather than to gratify his own tastes, in the enjoyment of greater freedom and a more humble and frugal mode of life.

In vain does the worshipper of fashion, by planting an ornate dwelling-house in the heart of a forest, endeavor to add to it the charm of a rustic cottage in the woods. The traveller, as he beholds its proud ornaments glittering through the trees, sees nothing of that charming repose, which, like a halo of beauty, surrounds the cottage of the rustic. He perceives in it the expression of a striving after something that is in-

compatible with its affectations. There may be a true love of nature among the inmates of this house, who would gladly divorce themselves from the frivolities of high life. But they cannot consent wholly to relinquish that bondage of fashion, which overpowers their love of freedom and simplicity, as the appetite of the inebriate causes him, in spite of his better resolutions, to turn back to the cup that is destroying him. Nature may harmonize with elegance, refinement, and grandeur; but not with pretence. The rural deities will not make their haunts near the abode of vanity; and the naiad, when she sees her rustic fountain destroyed, turns sorrowfully away from the spouting foam of a *jet d' eau*.

There may be more true love of nature in the inmates of this ambitious dwelling, than in those of the rustic cottage; but the former gives no evidence of this love, if it is built in a style that expresses that folly which is continually drawing them away from nature and happiness. Place them both in a picture, and the fashionable house excites only the idea of coxcombry, while the rustic cottage charms all hearts. Is it not possible to borrow this indescribable charm, and add it to our country residences? Not until the builder or designer has become as one of these rustics in the simplicity of his heart, and is content to forget the world when he is planning for his retirement. Then might the traveller pause to contemplate with delight, a house in which the absence of all affectation renders doubly charming those rural accompaniments, in which the wealth of the owner, if he be wealthy, is detected only by the simple magnificence of his grounds, and his taste displayed by the charm which art has added to nature, without degrading her Fauns and her Hamadryads into mere deities of the boudoir.

These old houses with a long back roof are not the only picturesque houses among our ancient buildings; but no other style seems to me so truly American. Wherever we journey in New England, we find neat little cottages of one story, some with a door in front dividing the house into two equal parts, some with a door at the side of the front, and a vestibule with a door at the opposite end. It is common, when you meet with one of these old cottages, in the less frequented streets in the country, to see an elm standing in front, shading a wide extent of lawn. Sometimes there may be merely an apple-tree or pear-tree for purposes of shade. A rose-bush under one of the windows, bearing flowers of a deep crimson, and a lilac at the corner of the garden near the house, are perhaps the only shrubbery. These humble dwellings are the principal attraction in some of our old winding roads, and they are remembered in connection with many delightful rural excursions. The rage that has possessed the sons of the original occupants of these cottages for putting up pasteboard imitations of something existing partly in romance and partly in the imagination of the designer, has destroyed the rurality of many of these scenes in our old country villages.

Any marks of pretension, or of striving after something beyond the supposed circumstances of the occupants of a house, are disagreeable to the spectator. Could the sons of the old-fashioned people who occupied these plain dwellings have labored to preserve the simplicity and rustic expression of these, combined with a purer style of architecture, the effect would have been exceedingly pleasing. They have done just the opposite of this. They seem to have been ambitious to exclude from their houses every thing that would be

remotely suggestive of the simple habits of rural life, and have endeavored to make them look as much as possible, with one hundredth part of the cost, like the villa of a nobleman. So many of these ambitious cottages have been reared in many of our old streets, as to have entirely destroyed that picturesque beauty that made almost every route a pleasant landscape. The street, once covered on all sides with those rural scenes that charm every lover of the country, has become as tame as one of those new-made streets, laid out by speculators, to be sold in lots under the hammer of the auctioneer.

The New England people have been repeatedly characterized as wanting in taste; and this deficiency is supposed to be exemplified in the entire absence of ornamental work about our old houses and their inclosures. It is a maxim that a person who is deficient in taste always runs to an extreme in the use of ornaments, whenever he attempts to use them. Hence the profusely decorated houses of the present generation do not evince any positive improvement in taste, when compared with those of their predecessors. They are simply a proof that the people of the present time have more ambition; but that want of taste, which a former generation exhibited in their entire disregard of ornament, is manifested in their successors, by their profuse and indiscriminate use of it. That great progress has been made throughout the land, will not be denied; but the present state of public taste is perhaps a transition state from an age of comparative rudeness to one of perfected improvement.

The object of these remarks is not to deride wealth, but to condemn the ostentation of wealth that does not exist, instead of guiding oneself by a careful study of

the rules of taste. An intelligent man of great pecuniary resources would reject these meretricious decorations, as the mere sham substitute for something better which he would adopt, because he could afford it. The false taste which is censured is mere architectural hypocrisy. My object is to analyze certain of our emotions and sentiments, and to prove thereby that the man who builds a *showy* house, not only offends against good taste, but also essentially mars his own happiness. Why do we contemplate with the purest delight a simple cottage in a half rude, half cultivated field, except that it gives indications of something adapted to confer happiness upon its inmates? The rustic well, with a long pole fastened to a lever, by which the bucket is raised; the neat stonewall or iron-gray fence that marks the boundary of the yard; the old standard apple-trees dotted about irregularly, all over the grounds; the never-failing brook following its native circuitous course through the meadow; all these objects present to the eye a scene that is strongly suggestive of domestic comfort and happiness.

Let us not, in our zeal for rearing something beautiful, overlook the effect of these venerable relics of the more simple mode of life that prevailed fifty years since. Let us not mistake mere glitter for beauty, nor the promptings of vanity for those of taste. Let us beware, lest in our passion for improvement, without a rational aim, we banish simplicity from the old farm, and allow fashion to usurp the throne of nature in her own groves. Far distant be the time when the less familiar birds of our forest are compelled to retire beyond the confines of our villages, and when the red-thrush is heard only in a few solitary places, mourning over that barbarous art which has destroyed every green thicket

of native shrubbery, where alone she makes her haunts. This rage for foreign shrubbery is fatal to the birds, each species of which is dependent on certain native trees and shrubs, for subsistence and protection. By eradicating every native coppice, and planting exotics in their place, we may as effectually banish the thrushes, and many other species of warblers, from our territories, as by constantly shooting them.

Another style of old houses is the square house with a hipped roof, usually of two stories. These are a little more pretending than the others I have described, and are more frequently seen with an ornamental fence in front, after the present fashion. Hence they are less attractive than some of the more primitive houses. A more pleasing house is a nearly square building of one story, with a curb roof, having the front door at the extreme end of the front, and a vestibule on one side, formed by extending the back half of the house a few feet, with only half a roof, making the door in the vestibule and the front door face the same way. Modern improvers say there is no beauty in these old houses. As well might they say there is no beauty in an old tree, unless it is nicely trimmed and whitewashed. More charming to the sight is a humble two-story house, unadorned by a single artistical decoration, with a venerable old tree in front and a wide extent of lawn, than the most showy house in the modern filagree style, with its narrow inclosures, its stiff spruces, and its ornamental fence that seems purposely designed to shut out nature.

One principal charm of a cottage consists in the rural appurtenances around it; and the less inexpressive architectural ornament there is about it the greater is this charm. It is true there is a style of building which

is always pleasing to the eye, and another which is either offensive or unattractive. A good style differs from a bad style chiefly in suggesting, by its external appearance, all those exterior and interior arrangements which serve to make it a happy and comfortable residence. This is the principal beauty which is desirable in a dwelling in order to produce the most charming effect. There are certain ornaments the utility of which is not apparent; but every thing added externally to a house, in accordance with the rule of proportions, that suggests to the mind an additional comfort or convenience, renders it more pleasing to the sight. Hence a plain, square house, without a single projection, is not so pleasant to look upon as another house, whose wings and vestibules, under separate roofs, exhibit at once to the mind, the conveniences within. A neatness and elegance of finish would improve it still further; but any inexpressive ornaments would spoil it. There is a class of ornaments, however, which are beautiful from suggesting something, independent of actual utility, that is agreeable to the imagination.

I would venture to affirm that the more showy the house, other things being equal, the less pleasure does it confer upon its owner or occupant. A perpetual glitter soon tires upon the eye and wearies the mind. There is a want of what painters call repose in a house that is excessively ornate; and the occupants of such a house must feel less tranquil satisfaction in it than in one of equal convenience, which is furnished only with such ornaments as have been denominated *chaste*. Chaste pleasures are those which are attended by no disgust and bring no repentance; and chaste ornaments resemble them in this respect, by giving permanent satisfaction, and by causing no fatigue to the eye or re-

pentance to the mind. There is a stronger analogy between these two things than any one who has not reflected upon the subject can be aware of. It is safe to assert that any particular style of building and grounds, which serves in the highest degree to promote the happiness of the permanent occupants, will confer the most enduring pleasure upon the beholder.

We frequently admire without one spark of affection, and love with deep affection what we do not admire. But more pleasure springs from love than from admiration; and when people madly relinquish those humble scenes and objects which they love, to obtain those which shall glitter in the public eye, tickle their own vanity and excite the envy of their neighbors, they commit a greater error than the most bitter declaimer against pride has generally imagined. I am far from believing the paradox, maintained by Rousseau, that man is more happy in a state of nature than in a civilized state. This author, in his efforts to grasp at an important truth, reached beyond it. That great truth I believe to be this:—that the more we extend and cultivate the moral and intellectual advantages and refinements of civilization, while we tie ourselves down to the simple habits of rustic life, the greater will be the sum of our happiness.

XL.

THE FLIGHT OF THE WOOD-NYMPHS.

ON the southern slope of a hill, nearly in the entrance of a valley, stood a rustic cottage inhabited by a plain industrious farmer and his family. The farm which was connected with the cottage was a beautiful intermixture of wood, tillage, and pasture ; and, imbosomed in these natural groves, the glistening waters of a miniature lake gave animation to the landscape, and became a scene of rustic sport for many a youthful angler. In front of the cottage was an irregular grassy slope, extending down to the road side, and wholly uninclosed. Through this natural lawn a narrow footpath, leading obliquely from the street to the door step, had been worn by the feet of passengers ; tufts of wild shrubbery grew here and there about the rocks that projected from the surface of the soil, and the sweet fern diffused its odors within a rood of the cottage windows. In the evening, a small herd of cows might be seen quietly ruminating under a rugged old oak, that stood about thirty paces from the house.

In the month of May this place was a favorite resort for all the children of the village, on account of the

multitude and variety of wild flowers that grew there, and the many pleasant arbors afforded by the woods that overshadowed the borders of the lake. On these green hill-sides they might often be seen weaving chains of the stems of the dandelion, or stringing white and blue violets upon a thread, with which they made garlands and necklaces to add to their own simple apparel. Later in the season, old and young resorted hither, to gather berries that grew abundantly in these grounds and the neighboring pastures. Many a May-queen has been crowned with the trailing evergreens that abounded in these wild lands, and covered the meadows with verdure in the depth of winter; and the children have returned home with baskets full of checkerberries and garlanded with early spring flowers.

There was something about the whole aspect of this place that was unaccountably delightful. Every one who visited it felt inspired with a mysterious sense of cheerfulness and pensive delight, that could hardly be explained, as there were in the same village many magnificent country-seats, with highly ornamented grounds, that failed in awakening any such emotions. Here nothing had ever been done to add a single ornament to the face of nature, but in all parts of the landscape there was a beauty that seemed unattainable by art. It became evident, at last, that these groves and pastures must be the residence of the rural deities, who, by their invisible presence, inspired every heart with those delightful sentiments, which, though not entirely unfelt on earth, are well known only in Paradise. It was the presence of these deities that yielded the place its mysterious charms. It was the naiad who gave romantic melody to the fountain that bubbled up from the mossy glen in the hill-side, and spread the hue of beauty over

the solitary lake in the valley ; and the dryads, or wood-nymphs, that caused these woodland arbors to rival the green retreats of Elysium.

In these rural solitudes were assembled all those little harmless animals, which by their motions and frolics seem to give life to the inanimate scenes of nature. Here were not only all the familiar birds that delight in the company of man ; but all the less familiar birds, that love to chant their wild melodies in the hiding-places of the solitary echoes, might also be heard in the season of song. The red-winged starling, long exiled from our villages, still uttered his melancholy ditty among the willows in the valley, and weaved his nest among the tall rushes that rose out of the water. The ruff-necked grouse beat his muffled drum in the adjoining forest, and the hermit thrush poured forth his indescribable strains, like some voice that had wandered from the groves of Idalia. Even in the depth of winter, the hearts of the farmer and his family were cheered by a multitude of merry voices, that seemed to be peculiar to the place.

This charming spot soon became celebrated in all the country around for its romantic beauties ; and it was eagerly coveted by many people of wealth who were seeking a place of rural retirement. The cottager who had lived here ever since his birth, regarded it with affection and reverence, as his own paternal homestead. But there are not many who can resist the temptation of gold to make a sacrifice either of principle or affection, and the rustic possessor of this little farm was not one of them. He sold it to a man of wealth and cultivated taste, whose wife and daughters were unaffected lovers of nature, and who were delighted with the idea of occupying a place that was celebrated as the resort

of the wood-nymphs and other deities of the groves. The new proprietor determined to adorn and improve it to the utmost extent. He resolved that the decorations of the modern landscape art should be added to the advantages it had derived from nature; the beauties of other climes should be ingrafted upon it, and the whole work should be crowned with the best efforts of the sculptor and the architect.

In accordance with these plans, the work of beautifying and improving the place was commenced. Standard English works on landscape gardening were consulted; the great Italian painters were studied for hints which nature is supposed to communicate only through their medium, and Brown and Repton guided the taste of the improver in all his operations. The rustic cottage was removed to a distant spot, and a splendid Italian villa was erected in the place of it. No labor nor money were spared in the effort to give it all the external and internal finish which would be needful to adorn a palace. Every piece of work was tasteful and correct; no counterfeit imitations of valuable ornaments were allowed; and when the edifice was completed, the most scientific architect could find no fault with it. It stood forth proudly on the brow of the hill, one of the masterpieces of villa architecture.

The elegance of the mansion made it the more apparent that the grounds must be improved, that the appearance of nature might harmonize with the work of the architect. On the grassy slope that fronted the cottage, there were occasional projections of the rock that was buried underneath the soil, and around these, various species of wild shrubbery had come up in many a tufted knoll. These prominences were split off, and covered with loam, and the whole surface was graded

into a beautifully even and rounded lawn. The wood anemone, the mouse-ear, and the saxifrage no longer spangled the grassy slope in early spring, nor the aster nor the golden-rod stood there to welcome the arrival of autumn. But tulips grew proudly in a fanciful border of spaded earth, under the side windows in the opening of the year, and verbenas, portulaccas, and calceolarias outshone all the native summer beauties of the landscape.

Surrounding the field that adjoined the cottage was an old stonewall, gray with lichens and covered with numerous wild vines that had clustered round it, as the ivy intertwines itself round the walls of ruined castles and abbeys in the old world. The clematis overshadowed it with flowers and foliage in summer, and with its beautiful silken down in the fall of the year; and the celastrus grew with it side by side, offering its honeyed flowers to the bee, and its scarlet, bitter-sweet berries to the hand of the simpler, or to the famishing winter birds. Among this vinery the summer warblers built their nests; and numbers of them were revealed to sight, when the foliage was swept away by the late autumnal winds.

The ladies of the mansion would not readily consent to the removal of this old stonewall, with its various rustic appurtenances, which seemed to them a part of the original charms of the place; but they were soon convinced that the villa ought not to stand in the midst of such shabby "surroundings." They were plied with arguments drawn from the works of men who had studied nature in the galleries of art, and through the medium of canvas, and were persuaded to believe that the principles of English landscape gardening must never be sacrificed to the crude notions of a poetic

mind. The ladies gave up their impulses in favor of the cold rules of professional taste. The stonewall was removed; the wild rose and the eglantine were destroyed; the flowering shrubs that formed, on each side of it, a glistening row of bloom and verdure, were rooted up; a neat paling fence was erected as a temporary boundary, and a hedge of buckthorn was planted all around the old pasture!

The lawn in front of the mansion was inclosed by an ornamental fence, and the narrow footpath that led up to the rude door step of the cottage, meeting in its course an occasional tuft of spiræa and low laurel, gave place to a neatly gravelled walk, four feet six inches wide, and shaped into a graceful serpentine curve. The inclosure was filled with exotic shrubbery; and silver maples, silver poplars, and silver firs stood at proper distances, like sentinels to guard the portals of this temple. The grounds were likewise embellished with statuary, and large marble vases, holding some flaunting exotic, stood in their assigned positions.

Two years had not elapsed before the design of the improver was completed, and the whole aspect of the place was changed, as if by enchantment. The rustic cart paths that led over the hills, and through the woods and valleys, were widened and covered with a neat spread of gravel, and all their crooked outlines were trimmed into a graceful shape. An air of neatness was apparent in every direction. The undergrowth of the wood was removed, certain misshapen trees were cut down, and all rubbish was taken away that could afford a harbor to noxious insects or mischievous quadrupeds. The lake that was embroidered with alders, swamp roses, button bushes, the fragrant clethra and the drooping andromeda, was improved by the removal

of all these useless plants, and gravel and loam were carted down to its edges, which were then covered with soil and sowed with grass seed, to afford a neat and lawn-like appearance to the grounds, and to visitors a firm foundation for their feet. The frequent tufts of shrubbery that gave a ragged look to the pasture were likewise removed, and the whole was planted with the most approved grasses.

Not many rods from the cottage was a natural fountain that bubbled up from a subterranean source on the hill-side, from which the farmer irrigated the greater part of his lands. It was a true rustic fountain, girded on one side by steep fern-clad rocks, and overshadowed by the gnarled and twisted branches of the aquatic hornbeam, one of the most grotesque and beautiful trees in the forest. From this fountain issued a rivulet, which was conducted along the declivity, until it poured its waters into a wooden trough, and formed a watering place for the cattle. These objects were altogether too rude to be admitted as a part of the map of improvements. The bed of the fountain was excavated into a deep and spacious reservoir, and from this a pipe was carried along underground to the front yard, where it terminated in a *jet d' eau*, that issued from a marble basin, and threw up a wide and graceful spray.

The inmates of the villa were charmed with the result of these operations. There was an air of elegance and "high keeping" about the grounds, that corresponded judiciously with the splendor of the villa and its outbuildings. No wild bushes were left in straggling tufts, to suggest the idea of poverty or negligence on the part of the proprietor; and the pasture, which was full of a great variety of wild plants or weeds, was repeatedly ploughed and pulverized to destroy

them, and afterwards "laid down" to legitimate English grasses. The dandelion and buttercups were no more to be seen in the spring, or the rank hawkweed in the autumn. Through this lawn neat gravel walks were made, that visitors might stroll there in the morning without getting wet by the dews. Many of the slopes were provided with marble steps, and here and there, in the centre of a clump of firs, was erected a marble statue to emblemize some one of the rural deities.

But where stands the idol, there we may not feel the presence of the deity. In vain do we strive to compensate nature, when we have despoiled her of her original charms, by calling in the aid of the sculptor, whose lifeless productions serve only to chill the imagination that might otherwise revel among the wizard creations of poetry. The images of Ceres, of Galatea, or of the heavenly huntress, were not attractive to the beings whom they were intended to represent. The naiad no longer sat by her fountain, which was held in a marble basin, and sent up its luminous spray, in the midst of the costly works of art. The dryads had forsaken the old wood, whose moss-grown trees were deprived of their variegated undergrowth, and of the native drapery that hung from their boughs. They wept over the exiled bird and the perished flowers of the wild wood, and fled sorrowfully to some new and distant haunts. The nymphs who used to frequent these shady retreats had also fled. Woods, groves, hills, and valleys were all deserted; and the cold, lifeless forms that were carved out of marble stood there alone, the mere symbols of charms that no longer existed.

The village children, who formerly assembled here to gather bouquets of wild roses, red summer lilies, and

the sweet scented pyrola, that grew up like a nun under the shade of the deep woods, came often since the improvements, but searched in vain for their favorite flowers. They no longer saw the squirrel upon the tree or the nest of the sparrow upon the vine-clad walls. The grounds, that seemed once to belong to them as well as to their rustic proprietor, now exhibited something in their aspect that made them feel like intruders, as soon as they set foot within their borders. These old woods and pastures, now that they were metamorphosed into park and lawn, had lost their charms for them, and they turned away with sadness, when they thought of those delightful arbors that would shelter them no more.

But the children were not the only sorrowers. The ladies of the mansion were grieved when they found that the rural deities had fled from the very objects which were erected for their shrines. The cause of their flight was a problem they could not explain. Why would they no longer dwell in their ancient abodes that seemed now so much worthier the residence of beings of a superior nature? Could not the beautiful green lawn that had taken the place of the weedy pasture; the commodious park which was once a tangled wood; could not the charming flowers of all climes which had been substituted for the inferior wild flowers; nor the marble fountain with its graceful spray, nor the neat spread gravel walks induce them to remain? More than all, could not the beautiful statuary that represented them in material shape, please them and retain them in their ancient haunts?

At length they began to suspect that there was a too entire absence of rustic scenes and objects in their present arrangements; and forthwith to appease the deities, rustic arches and bowers, made of rude mate-

rials, were erected and placed in different parts of the grounds. A summer-house was built of the rudest of logs, shingled with the rough bark of trees, and rocks were introduced for seats and covered with mosses. Fences were constructed in similar style, and various other rude devices were executed and distributed in a fanciful manner over the face of the landscape. But not even the shaggy goat-footed Pan would acknowledge any such thing for an altar. No such objects could be made to accord with the "high keeping" of the grounds, nor could they give an air of rusticity to scenes that were so elaborately ornamented. They were mere pieces of affectation; blotches upon the fair surface of beauty, that served no other purpose but to add deformity to the unique productions of art.

One day, as the ladies were strolling pensively along their accustomed paths, lamenting that nothing could be done to appease the divinities whom they had offended, they discovered in a little nook, under a cliff that projected over a rude entrance into the wood, a slab of weather-stained slate, resembling a headstone. Observing that it was lettered, they knelt down upon the green turf and read the following

INSCRIPTION.

In peaceful solitudes and sylvan shades
That lure to meditation; where the birds
Sing all day unmolested in their haunts,
And the rude soil still bears the tender wilding —
There dwell the rural deities. They love
The moss-grown trees and rocks, the flowery knoll,
The tangled wild wood, and the bower of ferns.
They fill each scene with beauty, and they prompt
The echoes to repeat the low of herds

And bleat of tender flocks. The voice of him
Who drives his team afield ; the joyous laugh
Of children, when, on pleasant days, they come
To take from gentle spring her gift of flowers,
Are music to their ears. All these they love ;
But shun the place where wealth and art have joined
To shut out nature from her own domains,
Or dress her in the flaunting robes of fashion.
Wouldst thou retain them ? — keep a humble heart,
Nor in their temples seek to show thy pride,
Or near their altars to parade thy wealth ;
Then may they come and dwell with thee, as once
With simple shepherdess and rural swain.

